Imperial Sceptics

British Critics of Empire
1850 – 1920

GREGORY CLAEYS

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IMPERIAL SCEPTICS

Imperial Sceptics provides a highly original analysis of the emergence of opposition to the British Empire from 1850 to 1920. Departing from existing accounts, which have focused upon the Boer War and the writings of John Hobson, Gregory Claeys proposes a new chronology for the contours of resistance to imperial expansion. Claeys locates the impetus for such opposition in the late 1850s with the British followers of Auguste Comte. Tracing critical strands of anti-imperial thought through to the First World War, Claeys then scrutinises the full spectrum of socialist writings from the early 1880s onwards, revealing a fundamental division over whether a new conception of 'socialist imperialism' could appeal to the electorate and satisfy economic demands. Based upon extensive archival research, and utilising rare printed sources, *Imperial Sceptics* will prove a major contribution to our understanding of nineteenth-century political thought, shedding new light on theories of nationalism, patriotism, the state and religion.

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Imperial Sceptics

The books in this series will discuss the emergence of intellectual traditions and of related new disciplines. The procedures, aims and vocabularies that were generated will be set in the context of the alternatives available within the contemporary frameworks of ideas and institutions. Through detailed studies of the evolution of such traditions, and their modification by different audiences, it is hoped that a new picture will form of the development of ideas in their concrete contexts. By this means, artificial distinctions between the history of philosophy, of the various sciences, of society and politics, and of literature may be seen to dissolve.

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IMPERIAL SCEPTICS

British Critics of Empire, 1850–1920

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This volume is respectfully dedicated to two men who, in very different ways, helped me to see another side: George S. Andrew Jr and Nguyen Ai Quoc.

Abbreviations

AA	*African Affairs*
Add. MS	British Library Additional Manuscript
AHR	*American Historical Review*
AJES	*American Journal of Economics and Sociology*
AJS	*American Journal of Sociology*
ASR	*American Sociological Review*
BJIS	*British Journal of International Studies*
BLPES	British Library of Political and Economic Science
BSSLH	*Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*
CHR	*Canadian Historical Review*
CR	*Contemporary Review*
DA	*Derbyshire Advertiser*
DR	*Diplomatic Review*
DUJ	*Durham University Journal*
EHR	*Economic History Review*
EJ	*Economic Journal*
ER	*The English Review*
EW	*Ethical World*
FR	*Fortnightly Review*
H&T	*History and Theory*
HEI	*History of European Ideas*
HJ	*Historical Journal*
HPE	*History of Political Economy*
HPT	*History of Political Thought*
HS	*Historical Studies*
HWJ	*History Workshop Journal*
IESHR	*Indian Economic and Social History Review*
IHS	*Irish Historical Studies*
IISG	International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam
IJE	*International Journal of Ethics*

ILP	Independent Labour Party
IRHPS	*International Review of History and Political Science*
IRSH	*International Review of Social History*
JAH	*Journal of African History*
JBS	*Journal of British Studies*
JCH	*Journal of Contemporary History*
JEH	*Journal of Economic History*
JHI	*Journal of the History of Ideas*
JICH	*Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*
JP	*Journal of Politics*
LL	*Labour Leader*
LPC	London Positivist Committee
LPS	London Positivist Society
MAC	Maison Auguste Comte
MAS	*Modern Asian Studies*
MG	*Manchester Guardian*
MH	*Midland History*
MRSPES	*Monthly Record of the South Place Ethical Society*
NA	*New Age*
NC	*The Nineteenth Century*
NLS	National Library of Scotland
NR	*National Reformer*
P&P	*Past and Present*
PMG	*Pall Mall Gazette*
PR	*Positivist Review*
Prog. Rev.	*Progressive Review*
PSQ	*Political Science Quarterly*
RN	*Reynolds's Newspaper*
RP	*Review of Politics*
RRPE	*Review of Radical Political Economics*
S&S	*Science and Society*
SDF	Social Democratic Federation
SPM	*South Place Monthly Magazine*
SPML	*South Place Monthly List*
SPMR	*South Place Monthly Review*
SR	*Sociological Review*
UCL	University College London
VS	*Victorian Studies*

Introduction: audi alteram partem:
imperialism and the moral imagination

This book focuses on the development of three issues in late nineteenth-century Britain: the emergence of explanations of the origin of the British empire; justifications for its continuation; and criticisms of its consequences. These questions were not initially perceived as being of earth-shattering importance. Indeed, Britons were famously described in 1883 by the historian Sir John Seeley as having acquired their overseas possessions 'in a fit of absence of mind'. But others would come to disagree strenuously with this judgement. To one of our leading protagonists, the best-known critic of imperialism, John Hobson, the empire 'was in actual history mainly the accumulation of quite clearly conceived pieces of political power, personal prestige, and trading profits. There was no absence of mind in the makers of its several parts, or even in the gradual bringing together and extension of these parts.'[1] Creating and enlarging the empire, in this view, had been in *someone's* interest – in whose interest was what Hobson aimed to discern – if perhaps not the nation's as a whole. And by the time Hobson intervened in this debate, during the Boer War, the nation's mind had become very much concentrated on the issue.

Explaining and justifying this empire were, however, two different if interwoven tasks, while criticism was a still more distinctive matter. That there was some relationship between Britain's commercial and financial system and imperial expansion had long been recognised.[2] By the 1820s political economists had become convinced that falling domestic rates of profit could be offset by more lucrative ventures abroad. 'Surplus capital', like Malthusian 'surplus population', wrote E. S. Cayley in 1830, 'must seek

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[1] John Seeley. *The Expansion of England* (1883), p. 8; J. A. Hobson. 'Social Thinkers in Nineteenth-Century England', *CR*, 137 (1930), 457. All works cited here were published in London unless otherwise noted.

[2] For a survey of the sources, see D. K. Fieldhouse. *The Theory of Capitalist Imperialism* (1967), pp. 2–44, and Anthony Webster. *The Debate on the Rise of the British Empire* (Manchester, 2006).

new countries; and by encouraging manufactures every where, may form the means of executing a design of Providence, that population should overspread every portion of the globe.' 'Colonies form the natural outlet both for the surplus capital and the redundant population of commercial states,' reiterated Archibald Alison in 1840, and the case was again reinforced by the economist J. E. Cairnes in 1864.[3] If, however, as Hobson posited in 1902, self-interested financiers were not only at root responsible for imperialist aggression but equally its chief beneficiaries, maintaining the empire seemed scarcely defensible. If, in turn, a higher 'civilisational' mission could be posited, or some measure of mutual economic welfare delineated, a convincing rationale for expansion might well still be conceded. But if both the moral and economic consequences of empire appeared dubious, so did support for its continuance.

A growing number of individuals, gaining increasingly in prominence at the end of the century, were to reach the latter conclusion. Yet surprisingly, no study has attempted to assess the development of anti-imperialist ideas from the mid-nineteenth century until the end of the First World War. The pioneering analysis of very late Victorian attitudes, Bernard Porter's admirable *Critics of Empire* (1968), while still valuable, is relatively narrow in scope, hardly considers one of the main groups central to the present analysis, the Positivists, and offers little detail respecting another key set of players, the later Victorian and Edwardian socialists.[4] Its account both of the origins of the explanation of empire, and especially the focus on finance capitalism, and of the emergence of stringent criticism of empire from a moral perspective, is accordingly limited.

A focus on the very late Victorian period, however, itself follows the logic of imperial expansion. In this epoch much of Africa and Asia were rapidly devoured by European conquerors. 'We must conquer or we must starve' had, according to one observer, become 'the latest gospel of Jingoism' by 1898. Peoples who stood in the way of plunder or settlement or who refused to submit to a capitalist work ethic were brusquely forced aside. 'Scientific' justification for such treatment was widely believed to have been furnished by Darwin's theory of natural selection, which in the vulgar doctrine of the 'survival of the fittest' seemingly excused even the extermination of many non-European peoples. Explanations of empire rooted in mass psychology, and what James Bryce termed the 'intensification of nationalistic pride and

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[3] E. S. Cayley. *On Commercial Economy* (1830), p. 34; Archibald Alison. *The Principles of Population* (2 vols., 1840), vol. I, p. 152; J. E. Cairnes. *Colonization and Colonial Government* (Dublin, 1864), pp. 300–1.

[4] Bernard Porter. *Critics of Empire. British Radical Attitudes towards Colonialism in Africa 1895–1914* (1968).

national vanity', now became increasingly predominant.[5] At home 'the people's ambition', observed the Frenchman Victor Bérard in 1906, was for 'an Imperial Britain to exploit the modern world as once did Imperial Rome'.[6] As 'Greater Britain', in Sir Charles Dilke's memorable phrase, emerged, naysayers and doom-mongers were rudely brushed aside.[7] With the Jubilee celebrations of 1897, the reconquest of the Sudan in 1898 and the Boer War of 1899, imperialist sentiment reached a crescendo of popular enthusiasm. In 1898 Cecil Rhodes proudly exulted that 'Little Englandism is now hopeless.'[8] Just as 'Britain' had been recrafted through the assimilation of Ireland and Scotland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as in colonising North America, British nationalism now swelled to fit an expansive new identity.[9] This 'new type of patriotism', in John Mackenzie's words, was composed of 'a renewed militarism, a devotion to royalty, an identification with and worship of national heroes, together with a contemporary cult of personality, and racial ideas associated with Social Darwinism'.[10] The new ideal may have compensated partly for something else that was being lost in the process of modernisation. The socialist Ernest Belfort Bax certainly thought so. Assessing 'The New Religion of the Possessing Classes', he asserted that the declining religious faith necessitated 'some substitute', which was 'gradually shaping in the form of modern "Patriotism", otherwise called "Imperialism", and by the profane "Jingoism"'. 'Patriotism is displacing the older Piety, with its bible of imperial history, its ritual worship of the flag, its commemorative saints'-days, its drill-processionals and its consecrated vestments,' Hobson agreed, with the 'mystical sentiments which formerly were directed towards a distant deity' being 'now claimed for the State and the social-economic order it seeks to ensure'. The Positivist sociologist Patrick Geddes, too, observed that 'theological rituals become patriotic ceremonies, the saluting of the flag replacing the attitude to prayer', with 'ancient nationalism' becoming 'the professional form of religion'.[11] Yet while most Britons

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[5] Lord Farrer. 'Does Trade Follow the Flag?', *CR*, 74 (1898), 810; James Bryce. *Essays and Addresses in Wartime* (1918), p. 131.

[6] Victor Bérard. *British Imperialism and Commercial Supremacy* (1906), p. 44.

[7] Charles Dilke. *Greater Britain* (3rd edn, 1869). The definitive study of the ideal is Duncan Bell's *The Idea of Greater Britain* (Princeton, 2007).

[8] *NA* (28 Apr. 1898), 40.

[9] The literature on this process is now considerable; a good starting-point is Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern, eds. *Empire and Others . . . 1600–1850* (1999).

[10] John M. Mackenzie. *Propaganda and Empire . . . 1880–1960* (Manchester, 1984), p. 2.

[11] *Justice* (9 Apr. 1914), 2; John Hobson. *Problems of a New World* (1921), p. 95; Geddes Papers, NLS, 10616, f. 114.

seem to have been complacent co-worshippers, happily assuming that they
were destined to rule the world and that the glories of the British Way of
Life were to be generously bestowed upon the grateful teeming millions,
others disagreed. Every religion has its unbelievers. The quasi-religion of
Empire, too, had its sceptics, to whom faith had to be juxtaposed to facts,
and honest doubt proclaimed regardless of consequence. To many of these,
as we will see throughout this book, the new religion was a self-destructive
delusion, and perhaps ultimately threatened the very existence of the nation
itself.

Existing accounts of anti-imperial sentiment view the critical moment of
unsettling self-doubt as the protracted, bloody and deeply divisive war with
the Boer Dutch settlers in southern Africa between 1899 and 1902. Britons
now for the first time began widely to question the moral rectitude of
imperial conquest as such. There now emerged, in Porter's description, a
group of 'extreme anti-imperialists' who believed that 'Imperial expansion
was morally wrong and the process must be reversed. The question of *how*
to rule colonies was therefore an irrelevance … This was the Little
Englander view, idealistic and impractical perhaps, but consistent and
passionately adhered to.'[12] In 1902 a budding economist, John Atkinson
Hobson, published *Imperialism: a Study*, which dissected the underlying
causes of the war in terms of both an aggressively nationalist or 'jingoistic'
desire – after the popular music-hall song of 1878 – for power and influence,
and the need to acquire territories as markets and sources of investment for
surplus capital. In A. J. P. Taylor's interpretation, Hobson 'did for
Imperialism what Marx had done for capitalism itself: he showed that it
sprang from inevitable economic causes, not from the wickedness of indi-
viduals'.[13] Once the standard starting-point for discussions of both the
explanation and critique of empire,[14] Hobson's book is still often widely
assumed to have assisted its dissolution in the decades following, and
promoted the view that empire was morally indefensible and that cultural
diversity is both inescapable and eminently desirable.[15]

Yet Hobson's role has also been disputed: was he greatly influential, or
little read at all? Was he brilliantly innovative, or anticipated by earlier

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[12] Porter. *Critics*, p. 2.
[13] A. J. P. Taylor. *The Trouble-Makers* (1957), p. 100.
[14] E.g., V. T. Harlow. *The Character of British Imperialism* (1939), p. 3; R. Koebner and H. D. Schmidt.
   Imperialism: the Story and Significance of a Political Word, 1840–1960 (Cambridge, 1964), pp. 221–49.
[15] See James Mayall. 'International Society and International Theory', in Michael Donelan, ed., *The
   Reason of States* (1978), p. 129, and generally Mayall. *Nationalism and International Society*
   (Cambridge, 1990), and James Tully. *Strange Multiplicity. Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity*
   (Cambridge, 1997). In the classic account, the 'predominant motifs' of the 'first stage' of the

writers? Was he a leading anti-imperialist, or indeed not much of an opponent of empire as such? Of the antecedents of Hobson's analysis, the 'bondholder' hypothesis respecting the promotion of the invasion of Egypt in 1882 by rapacious financiers is most frequently mentioned.[16] Here, it has been asserted, for 'the first time in British history it was the financial community rather than the soldiers or colonial officials who were held to be chiefly responsible for an act of imperial expansion'. Critics of the invasion, in Taylor's words, thus produced 'a landmark as the first, rather crude attempt to expose the financial basis of Imperialism'.[17]

The degree to which antagonism towards empire existed during much of the preceding epoch is, however, much less clear. Throughout the twentieth century historians quibbled as to just how strong antipathy towards expansion was throughout the Victorian period, and what its rationale and motives were. It is usually conceded that from the French Revolutionary wars there existed a 'dissenting' tradition in foreign policy, in Taylor's well-known term, associated initially with Charles James Fox's endorsement of nationalism in principle, as an ideal following on from the 'Rights of Man'. This tradition rejected great power chauvinism and plumped for a relative equality of states in the international sphere. Opponents of colonialism in the early nineteenth century are generally thought to have included some utilitarians, but not James Mill or various other later colonial 'reformers', who by the 1830s accepted that colonies might soak up surplus population.[18] Free trade ideals subsequently were widely assumed to have implied an anti-colonial stance. If Britain 'were well quit of India', political economists like Nassau Senior argued, 'we should be much stronger than we are now. The difficulty is how to get well quit of it.'[19] Leading colonial administrators reputed to have harboured similar reservations included Charles Buller, Lord Durham and William Molesworth. In mid-century the popular free trade doctrines of the Manchester School, as championed particularly by Richard Cobden and John Bright, also militated against foreign

emergence of economic imperialism 'were finally arranged into a system by J. A. Hobson' (Richard Koebner. 'The Concept of Economic Imperialism', *EHR*, 2, 1949, 6). See also D. K. Fieldhouse. '"Imperialism": a Historiographical Revision', *EHR*, 14 (1961), 187–209.

[16] See, e.g., A. J. Wilson. 'The Eleventh Plague of Egypt', *FR*, 32 (1882), 656–67, in which Britain's difficulties are ascribed to having 'taken the Egyptian bondholders under our protection'.

[17] Roger Owen. 'Egypt and Europe: From French Expedition to British Occupation', in Roger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe, eds., *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism* (1972), p. 196; Taylor. *The Trouble-Makers*, p. 90.

[18] A. G. L. Shaw. 'British Attitudes to the Colonies, c.1820–1850', *JBS*, 9 (1969), 71–95, and generally Klaus E. Knorr. *British Colonial Theories 1570–1870* (1944; repr. 1968).

[19] Goldwin Smith. *Commonwealth or Empire* (1902), p. 68. See R. L. Schuyler. *The Fall of the Old Colonial System ... 1770–1870* (Oxford, 1945), Donald Winch. *Classical Political Economy and the Colonies* (1965), and John Cunningham Wood. *British Economists and the Empire* (1983).

adventurism, and were supported by prominent liberal statesmen like Gladstone. The term 'imperialism' thus had a primarily negative connotation when it first began circulating in the late 1850s.[20] These, then, have usually been seen as the seeds of the later anti-imperialism of Hobson, a free trading Cobdenite radical whose moral tone was sharpened by Ruskinian humanism.[21]

The view, particularly as championed by Bodelsen, writing in 1924,[22] that there was thus a substantially anti-imperial phase which lasted for much of the period between Waterloo and the rise of the new imperialism of the 1880s, was, however, gradually displaced from the mid-twentieth century onwards by the theory that this was in fact an era of muted opposition, at best, while continuing territorial expansion occurred.[23] If early twentieth-century commentators might recall that in the 1870s (before the phrase had been coined) 'every one was a "little Englander"',[24] there was, writers like Eldridge emphasised by the 1970s, no dominant 'aversion to empire' in the 1860s.[25] Opponents of expansion did of course exist. In the early 1850s Disraeli had written privately that the 'wretched colonies' were a 'millstone round our necks'. Repeated references occur as to the desirability of 'cutting the painter' of the more mature, settled colonies, especially New Zealand, Canada and the Cape of Good Hope, notably in the later 1860s.[26] As late as 1870 Gladstone was still identified with a 'little England' disdain for retaining the colonies.[27] And some later historians still echoed the view that in 'the 1860s the Little Englanders certainly held the field'.[28] But colonial

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[20] Koebner. 'The Concept of Economic Imperialism'; Koebner and Schmidt. *Imperialism*, p. 1. F. H. Hinsley places its first use in English around 1858 (*Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, Cambridge, 1963, p. 248). On the range of meanings the term later conveyed, see Andrew S. Thompson. 'The Language of Imperialism ... 1895–1914', *JBS*, 36 (1997), 147–77.

[21] This is assumed, for instance, in A. P. Thornton. *The Imperial Idea and its Enemies* (1959).

[22] C. A. Bodelsen. *Studies in Mid-Victorian Imperialism* (Copenhagen, 1924). A good survey of the debate is Ged Martin. 'Anti-Imperialism in the Mid-Nineteenth Century and the Nature of the British Empire, 1820–1870', in Ronald Hyam and Ged Martin, *Reappraisals in British Imperial History* (1975), pp. 88–120.

[23] For the older view see, e.g., R. L. Schuyler. 'The Climax of Anti-Imperialism in England', *PSQ*, 36 (1921), 537–60, which sees this being reached during the 1860s, and Rita Hinden. *Empire and After* (1949), pp. 53–63. See also B. A. Knox. 'Reconsidering Mid-Victorian Imperialism', *JICH*, 1 (1972–3), 155–72.

[24] Brougham Villiers. *England and the New Era* (1920), p. 240. Asquith claimed that the phrase 'Little Englander' had been invented by W. T. Stead, c.1884 (*Fifty Years of Parliament*, 1926, p. 270).

[25] C. C. Eldridge. *England's Mission: the Imperial Idea ... 1868–80* (1973), p. 38. See, e.g., [Henry Thring]. *Suggestions for Colonial Reform* (1865), p. 12.

[26] Earl of Malmesbury. *Memoirs of an Ex-Minister* (2 vols., 1884), vol. I, p. 344; Julius Vogel. 'Greater or Lesser Britain', *NC*, 1 (July 1877), 810–12.

[27] Harlow. *The Character of British Imperialism*, p. 27.

[28] Richard Gott. 'Little Englanders', in Raphael Samuel, ed., *Patriotism. The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity* (3 vols., 1989), vol. I, p. 96.

'reformers', it is now more often conceded, generally sought cheaper and more efficient government rather than 'separation'.[29] Many who thought that some colonies might well desire independence also still saw them as potential partners in 'a common and mighty Empire'.[30] Utilitarians, too, became increasingly viewed as possessing a more pronounced imperial agenda.[31] Free trade itself came to be perceived as a form of imperialism. 'Little England' thus came to be seen as passing quickly out of currency as a description of attitudes towards empire in the mid-nineteenth century, dismissed as 'always a term of derision levelled at political opponents' rather than anything resembling a positive ideal (dangerous word, 'always', for a historian to use; we will soon see why it is inappropriate here).[32] The mid-Victorian years, thus, witnessed less 'an anti-imperialist climate of opinion', as John Strachey once described it,[33] than an oscillation between positive and negative images of the empire, mingled with a fair amount of simple disinterest.[34]

This book proposes to amend these accounts of anti-imperialism in seven ways. Firstly, it offers a new chronology for understanding the ideas which compose the concept. Many studies, such as Etherington's *Theories of Imperialism*, commence with Hobson, or at least with Hobson's most direct or supposed sources.[35] Porter's *Critics of Empire* similarly focuses on Hobson and *fin-de-siècle* debates.[36] Another important assessment, Thornton's *The Imperial Idea and its Enemies* (1959), equally offers little insight into the aims and achievements of the main groups studied here.[37] This book ends rather than beginning with Hobson, and attempts to define a much wider pre-existing spectrum of thought for contextualising his contribution to the debate than has been identified previously. Liberal and radical critics of imperial policy, however, who have been more carefully studied previously,

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[29] See, e.g., W. P. Morrell. *British Colonial Policy in the Age of Peel and Russell* (Oxford, 1930), p. 472.

[30] W. E. Forster. *Our Colonial Empire* (1875), p. 5.

[31] A recent survey is Bart Schultz and Georgios Varouxakis, eds., *Utilitarianism and Empire* (2005).

[32] Eldridge. *England's Mission*, p. 31. On free trade imperialism see R. Robinson and J. Gallagher. 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *EHR*, 6 (1953), 1–15, and Bernard Semmel. *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism . . . 1750–1850* (Cambridge, 1970). One well-known response is Oliver MacDonagh. 'The Anti-Imperialism of Free Trade', *EHR*, 14 (1962), 489–501.

[33] John Strachey. *The End of Empire* (1959), p. 72.

[34] So concludes Miles Taylor. '"Imperium et Libertas"? Rethinking the Radical Critique of Imperialism during the Nineteenth Century', *JICH*, 19 (1991), 17.

[35] Norman Etherington. *Theories of Imperialism* (1984), pp. 40–83.

[36] E.g., Porter. *Critics*, pp. 158–9.

[37] Bernard Semmel's *The Liberal Ideal and the Demons of Empire* (Baltimore, 1993), pp. 42–6, provides an account of Comte's views, but not of their influence in Britain.

particularly in relation to Parliament, do not enter substantially into the narrative here.

Secondly, the account presented here chronicles the centrality of Positivism's contribution to this debate from the early 1850s onwards. Ten Positivists produced more anti-imperial writing in this period than as many thousand socialists. Their attack on 'Big Englandism' effectively began with the Indian Mutiny and accelerated just as Disraeli proclaimed the new glories of empire.[38] By the late 1850s the British Positivists had adopted a moral stance respecting international relations which came closer to rejecting imperialism in principle than any other group. Their views were to prove considerably more influential than their small numbers suggest, but have been substantially neglected.

Thirdly, this book details the socialist contribution to anti-imperialist thought. It contends that pro-imperial attitudes were much more widespread amongst socialists than is usually assumed, to the degree that 'socialist imperialism' may be described as a leading trend in the early twentieth century. Indisputably, some socialists were 'Little Englanders' whose sympathies led them to abjure further expansion, and to commend speedy independence to existing imperial possessions. Others, however, and not merely the Fabians, who have previously been cast nearly alone in the (villainous) role, openly proclaimed themselves 'socialist imperialists', asserting that Britain had a special 'civilising mission' as well as an economic right and even obligation to develop the natural resources of those deemed incapable of doing so themselves. Many understood such goals in terms of creating a 'Socialist Commonwealth', where capitalist exploitation would be supplanted by a more co-operative and protective approach to both native peoples and their resources. This would be the view eventually adopted, if with some ambiguity, by much of the Labour Party by the mid-1920s. This means that the term 'anti-imperialism' must be used advisedly: those who were sceptical about the existing empire did not necessarily reject the concept *tout court*, and were sometimes happy to hedge their bets. We will see, too, that socialist debates about imperialism were intimately interwoven with often fierce disagreements about the compatibility of socialism and nationalism, and the forms which socialist cosmopolitanism and internationalism ought rightly to assume.

Fourthly, this book reassesses the issue of motivation in the emergence of anti-imperial ideas, laying stress upon the importance of religious as well as secular sources of a growing toleration of non-Christian societies, as well as

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[38] See Frederic Harrison. 'Big Englandism', *PR*, 8 (June 1900), 97–101.

of allegiance to a higher ideal of 'humanity'. It contends that for the Positivists, as well as prominent critics like Wilfrid Scawen Blunt and Annie Besant, religion provided an important means of identifying with non-Europeans, and according them a much greater respect than most contemporaries willingly extended. Even Hobson, normally treated as a resolutely 'secular' figure in this regard, can be shown to have been sympathetic to the need to conceive of a higher human obligation in quasi-religious terms.

Fifthly, this study re-examines the origins of the explanation of imperialism usually associated with Hobson, that the imperative of profitable investment of capital abroad because of the declining rate of profit at home led to a collusion between finance capital and government. It links this account to Positivist writing about India in the early 1870s, and less controversially, with the 1882 invasion of Egypt in particular, and demonstrates the centrality of this event to the development of pre-existing criticisms of empire.

Sixthly, it asks a series of questions about how Britain was imagined in a post-imperial state: about what, in other words, 'Little England' might look like as a positive ideal, no 'mere negation', but a conception of a 'healthy commonwealth' juxtaposed to empire.[39] In large measure, we will see, this ideal comprised a more self-sufficient, agriculturally independent, partly deindustrialised conception of the nation in which priority was given to domestic consumption over foreign trade, to bolstering home demand by promoting greater social equality, and to reducing bloated conurbations to entities where social bonds might still flourish. This 'civic' ideal, too, hostile to large states in principle, urging a commensurate stress upon duties rather than rights and upon the social rather than the individual nature of most forms of property, was shared by Positivists, some socialists, and by Hobson, and constitutes a core communitarian political assumption at the heart of much anti-imperialist thought.

Finally, the book concludes by linking this debate briefly to proposals for international government and limiting national sovereignty which culminated in an intense debate during the First World War. The pre-history of the League of Nations lies in part in anti-imperialist debates over the preceding half-century and more, and not solely in the wartime realisation of the catastrophic consequences of the system of great power alliances. My stopping point here is in part dictated by the fact that existing scholarship is much richer and more nuanced on the post-1918

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[39] 'The Little Englander', *Monthly Review*, 2 (Jan. 1901), 11, 13, 18.

period.[40] But it is usually recognised that this was a definitive moment in international relations at many levels. For the late, leading historian of international relations, F. H. Hinsley, 1919 ended the era when the international system was dominated by 'the rule of force'.[41] Others see here a 'utopian' moment when international relations seemed susceptible of being placed on a much more humane and harmonious footing.[42] For Britons the 'end of empire' began partly with creation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, the Union of South Africa in 1910, the Government of India Act of 1919, which permitted partial self-government at the provincial level, and the formation of the Irish Free State in 1921.[43] While the idea of self-determination or the right of nations to self-government emerged during the French Revolution, when it was yoked to that of popular sovereignty, it only became a viable concept in the 'Wilsonian' moment at the end of the First World War.[44] And yet, as we will see, when so much seemed to be promised, so little was delivered. The recognition of such demands for national self-determination was still widely assumed to be confined to European or 'civilised' peoples engulfed in pan-European empires like Austro-Hungary. Britain and France in particular seem to have felt that renewed exploitation of their empires could help to offset the devastation and expense of the war. This book is in a sense haunted by the image of one enduring symbol of this disappointment who stands for many others whose hopes were similarly dashed, an anguished young patriot, Nguyen Ai Quoc, who solicited help for the cause of Vietnamese nationalism in Paris at the end of the First World War, and found precious little.

THE TWO DEBATES IN FOREIGN AND COLONIAL POLICY

To set the stage briefly for this story we need to consider how Britons in this period saw other nations generally, and their own expanding empire in particular. Ideas about empire are also ideas about the relations between states, and as such part of what is now often termed international political

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[40] See, most notably, Stephen Howe. *Anticolonialism in British Politics* ... *1918–1964* (Oxford, 1993).
[41] F. H. Hinsley. *Nationalism and the International System* (1973), p. 141.
[42] See, e.g., Trevor Taylor. 'Utopianism', in Steve Smith, ed., *International Relations* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 92–107.
[43] See, e.g., John Darwin. *The End of the British Empire* (Oxford, 1991), p. xiii.
[44] See generally A. Rigo Sureda. *The Evolution of the Right of Self-Determination* (Leiden, 1973), pp. 17–24. Earlier accounts include Alfred Cobban. *National Self-Determination* (Oxford, 1944), and John Plamenatz. *On Alien Rule and Self-Government* (1960).

theory. They are also intimately interwoven with concepts of the nation. Indeed the claim has been made that much of modern nationalism is, *prima facie*, essentially anti-colonialism.[45] Analysts of international relations usually distinguish between at least three major traditions of thinking about relations between states: a Hobbesian view in which states pursue their interests unrestrictedly; a Kantian outlook in which humanity is perceived as having shared interests; and a Grotian tradition in which common rules are agreed upon by states to mitigate some of the effects of unrestrained self-interest. These ideal types or models, however, do not indicate how such theories actually developed in a given era. In general the nineteenth century is usually seen as a period when arguments for treating non-Christian nations differently from Christian ones began to be displaced by regulation based on international law.[46] This book thus concerns a moment in which we witness the much-contested emergence of an ideal of non-intervention in the affairs of other nations and peoples. This went dramatically against the vein of contemporary imperialist opinion, but would in the following century become increasingly widely accepted as the normative basis for international politics. This view commonly rejects standards of 'civilisation', or greater human utility, as well as other arguments used to justify conquest and empire. It affirms instead the validity of the emergence of non-European, anti-colonial forms of national self-determination. Some critics of empire, however, we will see, offered a much modified version of this ideal, where a leading role continues to be played by the great European colonial powers or some form of international government supervising or superseding their efforts.

In order to understand the emergence of this perspective we need to review briefly the principal justifications offered for empire itself, for no opponent of imperial expansion could hope to shift public opinion without assailing these positions. As political theorists have recognised, such apologia have rested in part upon an analogy between individuals and states which has been central to accounts of international relations since at least the time of Pufendorf in the seventeenth century and Vattel in the eighteenth.[47] On such an analogy rests the basic case for non-intervention – for respecting the rights of autonomous others – as well as paternalism, here meaning the recognising of a duty of 'adult' or 'mature' nations to 'improve'

[45] Anthony D. Smith. *Theories of Nationalism* (2nd edn, 1983), p. 65.
[46] See, e.g., Hedley Bull. *The Anarchical Society. A Study of Order in World Politics* (1977), pp. 13–33.
[47] See Charles R. Beitz. *Political Theory and International Relations* (Princeton, 1979), pp. 67–124.

others ('barbarous' or 'immature' peoples) in order to allow them to reach a higher, 'civilised' form of autonomy.

What can a dissection of nineteenth-century anti-imperialism lend to such complex and contentious debates? It can help us to see, firstly, how important the state/nation divide is in theoretical accounts: most such discussions assume the norm to be states dealing with other states within an organised international order. Peoples perceived to have failed to become or to have remained 'states' for one reason or another are usually left outside the equation.[48] Empires, however, often created political entities out of what they regarded as a condition of non- or pre-state barbarism, justifying their actions by their 'higher' civilisation. Often such 'states' were crafted from many peoples whose organisation may have been no more complex than the tribe, or as multi-faceted as a decaying or exploded former empire. Race, nationality, religion and political universalism, often combined in the definition of 'civilisation', thus enter into nineteenth-century accounts of how empire could be justified, or not. Yet we should not assume that the anti-imperialists were necessarily anti-interventionist in principle. To the contrary, what they usually contended for – though we will see that there were substantial disagreements here – was a form of autonomy in which both political conquest, or the imposition of an alien sovereignty, and economic exploitation were excluded. In other words, they reinforced liberal ideals of political autonomy by the addition of further qualifying characteristics. Anti-imperialists tended to assume, then, that liberal arguments exhibited a duplicity and hypocrisy respecting the autonomy of individuals, whether conceived as persons or states. In their view many liberals effectively conceded autonomy to persons and states more or less resembling themselves. All others were treated at their own peril. By contrast, those who were sceptical of imperialism created the basis for an ideal of self-determination which transcended the international state-system, and encompassed a respect for persons and peoples as such, regardless of the form or level of their political organisation. Many such critics were thus increasingly willing to assert, with the leading rationalist John Robertson, that 'none of the *à priori* arguments against autonomy for any race have any scientific validity'.[49] It is this view which, even in the breach, we normally accept today. But the process by which paternalist justifications for colonial and imperial rule came to be rejected, or modified, if

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[48] See the argument developed by John Rawls in *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999).
[49] John M. Robertson. 'The Rationale of Autonomy', in G. Spiller, ed., *Papers on Inter-Racial Problems* (1911), p. 44.

occasionally linked to Hobson in particular,[50] have been too little scrutinised.

Through the great age of modern imperial expansion, from the late fifteenth to the mid-twentieth century, then, three main arguments underpinned European justifications for conquering the rest of the world: the superiority of Christianity; the supremacy of European civilisation; and the greater economic efficiency of more 'advanced' peoples in developing the world's resources. These claims stretched back to Spain's conquest of the 'New World' – not so new to its inhabitants, the phrase itself a justification – in search of gold and treasure in the sixteenth century. They were then transmitted through the Spanish school of natural law and then by writers like Hugo Grotius, John Locke and Samuel Pufendorf through to the nineteenth century.[51] The advertising slogan of the natural law tradition which grew into international law might have been 'designed by Europeans for Europeans', the legal equivalent of the dum-dum bullet, for explicit use against indigenous peoples.[52] Underpinned by a firm conviction in the superiority of Christianity, its ideals remained virtually unchallenged until the end of this period. Other, hence 'false', religions were thought to be not merely primitive, but wilfully and stubbornly wrong, and requiring eradication through missionary activity. Killing non-Christians was always easier to justify than killing Christians, and conquering peoples in order to convert them could be construed as doing them a favour, since it might secure them eternal salvation. Wedding commerce to Christianity also involved remoulding indolent savages into efficient workers, for refusal to labour by the sweat of one's brow was never an option. For the crime of living in an environment where little effort sufficed to attain a sufficiency, and choosing not to exert themselves beyond that minimum, millions were enslaved and worked to death. Entire populations of indigenous peoples – Cubans, Tasmanians – simply disappeared.

The defence of civilisation rested additionally upon the supposedly superior manners of modern European regimes, and for Britain in particular, the advantages of liberty, the rule of law and constitutionalism.[53] In

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[50] Beitz. *Political Theory*, p. 100.

[51] A good starting-point for the background to these developments is Anthony Pagden. *Lords of All the World. Ideologies of Empire . . . c.1500–c.1800* (New Haven, 1995).

[52] G. P. Gooch pointed out that the dum-dum bullet, which was designed to fragment on impact, had been condemned at the Hague Conference by all powers except Britain and the United States, who 'declared that they could not forego their use in native wars' (*The Heart of the Empire*, 1901, p. 328).

[53] See generally Gerrit W. Gong. *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society* (Oxford, 1984). A recent treatment is Jennifer Pitts. 'Boundaries of Victorian International Law', in Duncan Bell, ed., *Victorian Visions of Global Order. Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 67–88.

combination such achievements denoted an indisputable superiority which translated practically into a near-obligation to raise others to a similar standard. To natural law writers like Christian Wolff, one of Vattel's main sources, writing in the 1760s, *carte blanche* virtually existed where raising peoples from barbarism was concerned. Indeed, imposing civilisation was a duty: 'Whatever one nation is able to contribute to the preservation and perfection of another nation in that in which the other is not self-sufficient, it is bound by nature to contribute that to the other.'[54] This 'contribution' was easiest in those large parts of the world in which nation-states either did not exist or had not yet been integrated into the world-system. Here individuals were deemed not to share rights held by Europeans, and in some measure they were thus 'subject' peoples – even if not already subjected – because *ipso facto* they were not rights-bearing citizens of a sovereign state. Thus as Acton suggested, the nineteenth-century idea of nationality by 'making the State and the nation commensurate with each other in theory' practically implied that 'the inferior races are exterminated or reduced to servitude, or outlawed, or put in a position of dependence'.[55] The only conception which could afford protection to *all* peoples thus had to rest upon an ideal either of equal individual rights or of extra-national communal rights, rather than the right of self-determination of already-united or sovereign peoples. And either ideal, not merely 'tolerant' but requiring protection of less-developed peoples, must rest upon some idea of human equality, and some conception therefore of the universality of claims for autonomy, no matter who the claimant.

We tend now to associate the proclamation of such rights – for in the absence of a theological framework they are invented rather than 'discovered' – with the second half of the twentieth century, and the United Nations Declaration of Universal Human Rights (1948) in particular. But their origins can certainly be dated to the Spanish conquest of the Americas, when various attempts were made to defend native rights. The early sixteenth-century natural law writer Franciscus de Vitoria, most notably, urged that the Indians were rational beings, if barbarians, and deserved to have their territories, possessions and persons respected as being 'men of

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[54] Quoted in L. C. Green and Olive P. Dickason. *The Law of Nations and the New World* (Edmonton, 1989), p. 68. But Wolff himself was considerably less favourably inclined towards colonialism than, for instance, Vattel would be (Richard Tuck, *The Rights of War and Peace. Political Thought and the International Order from Grotius to Kant*, Oxford, 1999, pp. 190–1, and generally Edward Keene. *Beyond the Anarchical Society. Grotius, Colonialism and Order in World Politics*, Cambridge, 2002, pp. 97–119).

[55] John E. D. Dalberg-Acton. *The History of Freedom and Other Essays* (1909), pp. 297–8.

equal standing'. Merely being a heathen thus did not deprive one of property rights.[56] Vitoria's contemporary, Bartolomeo de las Casas, vigorously protested against Spanish brutality in the Americas.[57] In practice, however, such complaints had little bearing on the actual treatment of native peoples. In our period this if anything deteriorated significantly as evangelicalism, racism, greed and superior weaponry widened the gap between conqueror and conquered. Victorian international lawyers like James Lorimer casually divided humanity into 'civilised', 'barbarous' and 'savage' portions, the last in turn being either 'progressive' or 'non-progressive', and accorded at most 'partial recognition' by the law of nations to non-civilised peoples.[58] Thus it became more commonly asserted that, as such, 'the history of colonization is the history of the annihilation of the native races: that, in the order of Providence, savage man is destined to disappear before civilized man: that in the "struggle for existence," the inferior races must give way to the superior'.[59]

Much of this argument concerned differing ideals of property rights. From the late seventeenth century onwards, we witness a general hardening of attitudes towards native or aboriginal rights. While their main aim was establishing norms for regulating relations between European states, leading natural law writers like Grotius, Locke and Pufendorf asked how original property in land was established, and why God intended a departure from the natural and communal to the civil, increasingly individuated state.[60] The complex development over several centuries of this tradition and its subsequent emergence into modern international law cannot be summarised here.[61] But three features of this process are noteworthy. The first is the assumption of the indisputable inferiority of barbarism compared with civilisation. There is no hint of noble savagery here. To Pufendorf, for example, in 'the one there is the rule of passion, war, fear, poverty, ugliness,

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[56] Franciscus de Vitoria. *De Indis et De Juri Belli Reflectiones* (Washington, D. C., 1917), p. 123; Francisco de Vitoria. *Political Writings* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 246. See Martin C. Ortega. 'Vitoria and the Universalist Conception of International Relations', in Ian Clark, ed., *Classic Theories of International Relations* (1996), p. 103, and Antony Anghie. *Imperialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 13–114.

[57] Bartolomé de Las Casas. *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (1552; repr. 1992).

[58] James Lorimer. *The Institutes of the Law of Nations* (2 vols., 1883), vol. I, pp. 101–2.

[59] C. S. Roundell. *England and Her Subject Races* (1866), pp. 4–5.

[60] On these developments generally see Istvan Hont. *Jealousy of Trade. International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005).

[61] For the themes discussed here a good starting-point is Green and Dickason. *The Law of Nations.* See also Bhikhu Parekh. 'Liberalism and Colonialism: A Critique of Locke and Mill', in Jan Nederveen Pieterse and Bhikhu Parekh, eds., *The Decolonization of Imagination* (1995), pp. 81–98, and Georgios Varouxakis's discussion in *Mill on Nationality* (2002), pp. 11–16.

solitude, barbarism, ignorance, savagery; in the other the rule of reason, peace, security, riches, beauty, society, refinement, knowledge, good will'.[62] Secondly, this meant that more primitive non-European forms of government and property-holding were not only intrinsically inferior, but conceptually inadmissible. In Locke's influential account, as James Tully has put it, 'Amerindian government does not qualify as a legitimate form of political society' and 'Amerindian customary land use is not a legitimate type of property.'[63] An open-ended justification for aboriginal dispossession was thus broadly agreed upon by the eighteenth century, based chiefly upon the divine injunction to foster commerce as the means of most efficiently sustaining the world's population, and upon the undisputed superiority of the civilised to the savage state. Such conquest was usually presumed to be legitimate wherever the land was not actively or only intermittently cultivated. Land was here often denominated 'vacant', or *terra nullius*. Later discussions of the 'right of empire' similarly often speak in terms of nations taking possession of a 'vacant tract of land' from which other nations could then be legally excluded.[64] On this principle all hunter-gatherer or pastoral societies were practically condemned to extinction out of hand. (We find the argument applied in Tasmania, for instance, though Henry Reynolds has shown that the indigenous population practised agriculture, though after a fashion incomprehensible to Europeans.[65]) But so too could primitive or only intermittently agricultural societies be described as 'vacant', for inefficient use of land could also be grounds for dispossession, God having, again in Locke's terms, given the earth to the 'industrious and the rational', not the indolent.[66] Thirdly, then, the commercial stage was privileged over all preceding stages, and described as their inevitable and beneficent outcome. 'Commercial society', as the Scots would term the last of the great stadial steps of social and economic evolution, not a pastoral Eden, was God's ultimate bequest to humanity.

A particularly important restatement of some of these themes came from Emerich de Vattel, whose *The Law of Nations or the Principles of Natural*

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[62] Samuel Pufendorf. *De Officio Hominis et Civis Juxta Legem Naturalem* (1682) (Oxford, 1927), p. 91.

[63] James Tully. *An Approach to Political Philosophy. Locke in Contexts* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 139.

[64] Travers Twiss. *The Law of Nations Considered as Independent Political Communities* (1851), pp. 195–6.

[65] Ironically the British did not consider Tasmania to be a *terra nullius* when they first began to colonise the island (Henry Reynolds. *Fate of a Free People. A Radical Re-examination of the Tasmanian Wars*, 1995, p. 124).

[66] John Locke. *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (2nd edn, Cambridge, 1970), p. 309. It may be noted that late Victorian land reformers estimated that as many as 3.1 million out of 7.7 million acres in Britain were uncultivated, vast estates being left vacant as aristocratic hunting grounds (*NR*, 9 May 1868, 301).

Law appeared in 1758 and would remain, as we will see, a key source for Victorian writers.[67] Vattel dismissed the claims of primitive peoples who failed adequately to exploit the land at their disposal, contending that those

who, though dwelling in fertile countries, disdain the cultivation of the soil and prefer to live by plunder, fail in their duty to themselves, injure their neighbors, and deserve to be exterminated like wild beasts of prey. There are others who, in order to avoid labor, seek to live upon their flocks and the fruits of the chase. This might well enough be done in the first age of the world, when the earth produced more than enough, without cultivation, for the small number of its inhabitants. But now that the human race has multiplied so greatly, it could not subsist if every people wished to live after that fashion. Those who still pursue this idle mode of life occupy more land than they would have need of under a system of honest labor, and they may not complain if other more industrious Nations, too confined at home, should come and occupy part of their lands.[68]

This interpretation of 'Indian title' was endorsed by many later authors.[69] Vattel also shared with later writers, such as Adam Smith and Thomas Paine, the assumption of a Providential design to utilise the earth's resources through commerce. His crucial contribution was to extend the legal right of occupying 'vacant' land, which had initially been limited to unpopulated regions, to comprise populated areas which were inefficiently developed.[70] As importantly, Vattel also argued that all peoples were obliged firstly to cultivate the earth, and then to exchange its produce through trade. In more modern terms, globalisation, or entering the international market, was not an option, but an obligation. The crucial issue here, in this combination of *raison d'état* with *raison de civilisation*, was what degree of coercion might be justified to fulfil this divine intention. Generally speaking, Vattel contended, 'the right which a Nation has to buy from others what it needs … is not one of those which are called *perfect* and which are accompanied with the right to use compulsion'. Trade between established nations, in other words, was not obligatory. Yet at the same time nations had a right to obtain at a fair price what they required from others. On the basic principle that 'the earth belongs to all mankind as a means of sustaining life', if there were 'lands which the savages have no special need of and are making no present and continuous use of, they may lawfully take

[67] E.g., Twiss. *The Law of Nations*, pp. 5, 12 *et seq*. A useful survey of these developments is Jörg Fisch. 'Internationalizing Civilization by Dissolving International Society: the Status of Non-European Territories in Nineteenth-Century International Law', in Martin H. Geyer and Johannes Paulmann, eds., *The Mechanics of Internationalism* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 235–58.
[68] Emerich de Vattel. *The Law of Nations* (1758) (3 vols., Washington, D.C., 1916), vol. III, p. 38.
[69] E.g., Twiss. *The Law of Nations*, pp. 186–9.
[70] Mayall. 'International Society and International Theory', p. 128.

possession of them and establish colonies in them'. Moreover, Vattel also admitted a class of cases based upon necessity, for instance, where 'a Nation is in absolute need of supplies of food, it can force its neighbors, who have an over-supply, to furnish it food at a just price, and it can even take what it needs by force if its neighbors are unwilling to sell. Its urgent necessity restores the original state of common ownership, the abolition of which could not deprive anyone of the necessities of life.'[71] Yet we should note, for later reference, that this case is one based upon actual famine, not merely a general need of raw materials for industrial or commercial purposes. In the domain of home trade, then, Vattel recognised an 'obligation to turn over to others, at a fair price, things they need and for which the owner has no personal use', an obligation usually converted into a perfect right by treaty. In foreign trade, a nation had 'only an imperfect right to buy from others what it now has need of, and it is for these others to decide whether they are in a position to sell'. There was no obligation to sell any goods needed at home, and it was thus 'for each Nation to decide whether it will carry on commerce with another or not'.[72] But as 'nations' were sovereign states, those not integrated within the international system were not subject to these rules. If they were not farmers, or lacked private property in land, so much the worse for them. This account, then, essentially presumed that in these cases superior rights based upon efficient use would prevail. When the House of Commons enquired into land claims in New Zealand in 1840, therefore, a committee established that

the uncivilized inhabitants of any country have but a qualified dominion over it, or a right of occupancy only, and until they establish amongst themselves a settled form of government, and subjugate the ground to their own uses by the cultivation of it, they cannot grant to individuals, not of their own tribe, any portion of it, for the simple reason that they have not themselves any individual property in it.[73]

Such assumptions would continue to prevail through the early decades of the twentieth century. In *The Idea of Public Right* (1918), for example, the reigning doctrine of expansion was described as being that

If any territory suitable for colonization is sparsely held by a race which cannot populate it properly, permission for colonization should be given to some race

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[71] Vattel. *The Law of Nations*, vol. III, pp. 122, 39, 85, 149. See Andrew Hurrell. 'Vattel: Pluralism and Its Limits', in Ian Clark, ed., *Classical Theories of International Relations* (1996), pp. 233–55, and Francis Ruddy. *International Law in the Enlightenment* (Dobbs Ferry, 1975), pp. 149–52. Defoe developed an argument respecting 'Reason of Trade' which is pertinent in this context. See Jonathan Haslam. *No Virtue Like Necessity* (2002), p. 140.

[72] Vattel. *The Law of Nations*, vol. III, pp. 39–41.

[73] Charles Terry. *New Zealand* (1842), p. 78.

which is too numerous for its present territory. The rights of the inhabiting races can be secured either by concentration in a smaller area or by placing them on an equal footing with the colonists, with separate racial electoral areas such as exist at present for Maoris and Pakehas in New Zealand.[74]

That natives not under the formal jurisdiction of a state could be dispossessed of their lands without 'conquest' as such legally taking place was a doctrine upheld indeed as late as 1926 in the case of Swaziland.[75] Throughout this period, then, these doctrines justified the conquest of all non-Christian lands, and can rightly be described as a 'tacit right to war against "infidel" or "uncivilized" peoples' in principle.[76] As Sankar Muthu has indicated, there was some counterweight to this tradition, notably in the writings of Diderot, Kant and Herder.[77] But in Britain such claims represented a little-discussed and often entirely neglected position through this period. While their ideas are clearly germane to an account of the history of political thought, which often focuses upon the exposition of the theories of leading figures, they play a lesser role in reconstructing the intellectual history of the period, where a reckoning with how thought actually develops at a wider level is also at issue. Generally speaking Britons upheld the view that 'those principles of law and justice which jurists have tried to embody in a code of international law are not applicable to transactions with the nations of Asia', and, regarding themselves as bound by minimal restraints, acted accordingly.[78] In some cases – Afghanistan, China – the result was an almost unbroken pattern of aggression which lasted throughout much of the century. In others, notably the effort to suppress the African slave trade, high-minded principle gained in priority. Nor should we ignore, in treating the issue of property rights, the crude centrality of plunder as a motive in imperial expansion. This too had the figleaf of the rules of war to cover it, and was often highly organised, with British military units in India, for instance, having soldiers assigned to the task of seizing treasure and ensuring its distribution, as with Royal Navy prizes, according to rank.[79]

[74] *The Idea of Public Right* (1918), pp. 316–17.
[75] See generally R. Y. Jennings. *The Acquisition of Territory in International Law* (Manchester, 1963), pp. 16–35.
[76] Sharon Korman. *The Right of Conquest* (Oxford, 1996), p. 47.
[77] See Sankar Muthu. *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton, 2003). Herder was not, however, a key source for Comte (Mary Pickering. *Auguste Comte*, vol. I, Cambridge, 1993, p. 286).
[78] Augustus Granville Stapledon. *Intervention and Non-intervention or the Foreign Policy of Great Britain from 1790 to 1865* (1866), p. 157.
[79] During the Mutiny the 'field treasure chest' was replaced by the systematic use of 'prize agents' (Francis Cornwallis Maude. *Memoirs of the Mutiny*, 2 vols., 2nd edn, 1894, vol. I, p. 47).

Related to the justification of the right of conquest by Europeans, secondly, was a chiefly intra-European debate about what right the leading civilised powers had to interfere in each other's internal affairs. We can introduce this argument much more briefly. After 1815 the leading European powers in principle abjured intervention in each other's internal government.[80] In practice, however, intercessions of various types were almost constant throughout the century. In Britain's case, intervention supported specific constitutional provisions (Spain in 1823, for example), dynastic succession (Spain again, in 1836), national independence (Portugal, 1827), or restrained the aggression of some governments (Turkey, 1838), regulated the attempted suppression of an insurgency (Sicily, 1849), and defended the rights of British citizens (the Don Pacifico affair in Greece, 1850), to take only a few examples. In some instances, such as that of Spain in 1834, Britain interceded in favour of a principle of constitutional government, and against absolutism. In others it disavowed any attempt to defend national independence against invasion from without (as in France's entry into Rome in 1851). Sometimes long-term treaties practically bound Britain to concede the suppression of nationalist aspirations (the Treaty of Vienna respecting the partition of Poland, for instance). But treaties were routinely ignored where interest was deemed superior; indeed it was lamented that by 1865 Britain had become a 'by-word for bad faith and violence throughout the world'.[81] Yet there was also widespread sympathy for peoples suffering under despotic rule elsewhere. After 1848 the issue of 'nationalities' became and remained constantly pressing, and writers like Lord Hobart in 1866 argued in favour of intervention in support of 'a people against the superior power of foreign rulers', such as Italy against Austria.[82] After 1870–1 the unification of Germany affected these equations in a new manner. International relations in the second half of the century have been characterised by F. H. Hinsley as shifting away from Palmerstonian interventionism against France and the maintenance of the 'balance of power' and towards a reckoning with Germany.[83] Some contemporaries thought competition with Germany was one of the key causes of British imperial expansion, and implied there was no turning back. To Sir Charles Lucas, thus, writing in 1916, the British empire upheld 'an independent Great

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[80] On the background generally see R. J. Vincent. *Nonintervention and International Order* (Princeton, 1974), pp. 19–144, and Jack Snyder. 'Social Imperialism in Victorian Britain', in Snyder, *Myths of Empire* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1991), pp. 153–212.

[81] Stapledon. *Intervention and Non-intervention*, p. 270, where these cases are explored.

[82] Lord Hobart. *Political Essays* (1866), p. 48.

[83] Hinsley. *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, pp. 238–71.

Britain', while its loss of the empire meant 'a dependent Great Britain, a British Democracy existing on sufferance, if it exists at all'.[84] From 1848 onwards, then, a constant conflict existed between imperial expansionism and a notional ideal of non-interference and sympathetic attitude towards 'legitimate' nationalist aspirations. Within Britain itself this debate focused initially upon Italy and Hungary, and then increasingly on Ireland, though whether Ireland was a settler colony, part of the empire or something entirely different was also much disputed.

SOME STRANDS OF IMPERIAL SCEPTICISM

Although this book focuses on two main groups critical of imperial expansion, these drew upon a number of pre-existing and parallel trends of thought, and in turn found allies amongst a variety of later radicals and reformers. Chief amongst these earlier critics were the Manchester School free traders Richard Cobden and John Bright, and, amongst the later, the iconoclastic anti-imperialist Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, whose influence justifies some introduction here. But several other varieties of sceptical thought also merit brief mention.

Though our main focus here is the period after 1848, enlightenment cosmopolitanism, with its roots in Stoicism and medieval Christianity, spawned a variety of plans for world or at least pan-European peace, notably by Kant, Penn, St Pierre, Bentham and Saint-Simon. Three later eighteenth-century thinkers, Adam Smith, Edmund Burke and Jeremy Bentham, specifically wedded ideas of free trade as a pacific process tending to unite nations to a critical appraisal of imperial expansion, and found plebeian echoes in writers like Paine. Smith condemned the greedy, monopolistic practices of the East India Company, and equally 'the folly of hunting after gold and silver mines', and the injustice of seizing the lands of 'harmless natives'.[85] Burke's famous arraignment of the 'tyranny, malice, cruelty, and oppression' of Warren Hastings's 'great, notorious system' of 'pecuniary corruption' in India would be remembered well into the following century.[86] Bentham, who coined the term 'international', floated various peace proposals, and urged emancipation of Britain's colonies as early as 1793, though he also designed emigration plans for Australia. His *Plan for*

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[84] C. P. Lucas *et al. The Empire and the Future* (1916), p. 11.
[85] Adam Smith. *An Inquiry into the … Wealth of Nations* (2 vols., 1869), vol. II, p. 169.
[86] Edmund Burke. *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (12 vols., 1849), vol. X, pp. 5, 20, 39. A recent treatment of the case is Frederick G. Whelan. *Edmund Burke and India* (Pittsburgh, 1996).

an Universal and Perpetual Peace (1789) insisted that it was 'not in the
interest of Great Britain to have any foreign dependencies whatsoever'.
And in *Emancipate Your Colonies* (1793), he castigated his countrymen for
wanting only to 'monopolize and cramp' the trade of non-Europeans.[87]

   The early utilitarians, however, were not anti-imperial as such.[88]
Bentham's chief follower, James Mill, employed at the East India
Company in 1819, famously characterised the settler colonies as a 'vast
system of outdoor relief for the upper classes'. There was 'not one of the
colonies but what augments the number of places', a development originat-
ing with the Roman aristocracy. In addition colonies were 'grand sources of
wars', the combination producing 'so many things agreeable to the ruling
few, that the ruling few hardly ever seem to be happy, except when engaged
in them'.[89] Mill's *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article, 'Colony', later cited by
W. E. H. Lecky as evidencing anti-imperial sentiment, insisted that all
settlements were burdensome which were not self-supporting. This line of
criticism met plebeian echoes in William Cobbett's complaint that the
'villainous colonies are held for no earthly purpose but ... giving money
to the relations and dependants of the aristocracy'.[90] It also found a refrain
in later liberal writers like George Cornewall Lewis and Goldwin Smith.
The latter put the case for 'colonial emancipation' in a series of letters to the
Daily News in 1862–3, basing his argument partly on Adam Smith, though
insisting that no one could 'justly impeach the morality of England in
conquering India'.[91] But Mill was also barely less disdainful about Indian
culture than the evangelicals, and offered a resolute civilisational justifica-
tion for British conquests in his *History of British India*, notably by con-
demning Hinduism as the offspring of the 'wild and ungoverned
imagination ... of a rude and credulous people'.[92] If there was a utilitarian

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[87] *The Works of Jeremy Bentham* (11 vols., 1843), vol. II, p. 546; vol. IV, p. 409.
[88] See generally Uday Singh Mehta. *Liberalism and Empire* (Chicago, 1999), and Jennifer Pitts. *A Turn to Empire. The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, 2005).
[89] James Mill. *Essays* (1828), pp. 5, 32–3.
[90] W. E. H. Lecky. *The Empire* (1893), pp. 4–5; William Cobbett. *Rural Rides* (2 vols., 1893), vol. II, p. 338.
[91] Alexander Bain. *James Mill* (1891), p. 242; George Cornewall Lewis. *An Essay on the Government of Dependencies* (1891), pp. 241–5; J. E. T. Rogers. *Cobden and Modern Political Opinion* (1873), pp. 170–1; Goldwin Smith. *The Empire* (1863), p. 258. Frederic Harrison thought that here Smith's 'whole notion is a résumé of the principles sometimes in the actual language of Congreve's various pamphlets' (Harrison Papers, 1/37, f. 3). He wrote to thank Smith for attacking imperialism in 1900 (*A Selection from Goldwin Smith's Correspondence*, 1913, p. 340). Smith in turn later wrote to Harrison about how much he admired Comte as a 'servant of humanity' (Harrison Papers, 1/106, f. 7). On Smith's views during the Boer War, see R. Craig Brown. 'Goldwin Smith and Anti-Imperialism', *CHR*, 43 (1962), 93–105.
[92] James Mill. *The History of British India* (2nd edn, 6 vols., 1820), vol. I, p. 143. See Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's* The History of British India *and Orientalism* (Oxford, 1992).

agenda for India here, it focused on the administrative rationalisation of the only regime suitable to India, a 'simple form of arbitrary government' in which greater Indian participation was both unnecessary and unwelcome.[93]

John Stuart Mill, similarly employed by the East India Company from 1823 for his entire career, did defend the principle that it was 'in general a necessary condition of free institutions that the boundaries of governments should coincide in the main with those of nationalities'.[94] But in *On Liberty* (1859) he famously termed despotism 'a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end'.[95] 'Barbarians', being deemed incapable of reciprocity or of being 'depended on for observing any rules', were thus outside of the scope of the law of nations.[96] Respecting European politics, however, Mill struck a distinctly more moral tone. In 'A Few Words on Non-Intervention' (1859) he supported assisting liberal nationalist struggles against foreign oppressors as a corollary of the premise that nations as well as individuals had a moral duty to promote the 'weal of the human race'.[97] This contrast in outlook, one standard for Europeans, another for the rest of the world, how it was asserted and how it was challenged, will remain a constant theme through this book.

The early Victorian socialists were little concerned with empire, but much more with international peace. The founder of British communitarian socialism, Robert Owen, condemned 'not only the evils of war, but the folly of it', and greatly admired the Quakers for refusing to engage in combat.[98] He also opposed standing armies, favouring a citizens' militia. A cosmopolitan, Owen proposed to 'gradually terminate all local nationalities, and make the population of the earth into one nation, with one language, interest, and kind feeling for one another, and thus by degrees form our race into one enlightened family'. He did not, however, defend maintaining British rule in India or elsewhere, but recommended instead that all nations be divided into semi-autarkic

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[93] *Edinburgh Review*, Apr. 1810, quoted in William J. Barber. *British Economic Thought and India 1600–1858* (Oxford, 1975), p. 138; Eric Stokes. *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford, 1959), p. 65.

[94] J. S. Mill. *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861), pp. 291–2. Free institutions, he added, were 'next to impossible in a country made up of different nationality' (p. 290).

[95] J. S. Mill. *On Liberty* (1859), p. 23. See E. P. Sullivan. 'Liberalism and Imperialism. J. S. Mill's Defense of the British Empire', *JHI*, 44 (1983), 599–617; Lynn Zastoupil. *John Stuart Mill and India* (Stanford, 1994); M. I. Moir, Douglas Peers and Lynn Zastoupil, eds. *J. S. Mill's Encounter with India* (Toronto, 1999); Michael Levin. *J. S. Mill on Civilization and Barbarism* (2004).

[96] J. S. Mill. *Collected Works*, vol. XXI (1984), p. 118.

[97] Mill. *Works*, vol. XXI, pp. 109–24. See Kenneth E. Miller. 'John Stuart Mill's Theory of International Relations', *JHI*, 22 (1961), 493–514, Varouxakis. *Mill on Nationality*, and generally F. R. Flournoy. 'British Liberal Theories of International Relations (1848–1898)', *JHI*, 7 (1946), 195–217.

[98] Robert Owen. *Selected Works of Robert Owen* (4 vols., 1993), vol. I, p. 327.

co-operative colonies, then connected to one another, beginning with Britain and the United States, in a 'Federative Union of Nations'.[99] Some Owenites would later emerge as critics of empire; E. T. Craig, notably, denounced the 'Bondholders' bloodthirsty slaughterings of the Arabs by machine-guns and Gatlings' during the Sudan war of 1885.[100]

Focusing as it did on domestic political and economic reform, the Chartist movement, begun in 1836, rarely engaged in detail with issues of foreign policy prior to the revolutions of 1848. The Chartists did, however, publish a pamphlet favouring the rebellious Canadians in 1837.[101] Under the slogan 'All Mankind are Brothers', the London Working Men's Association addressed the Polish, Belgian, French and other working classes, and underscored the need to eradicate national prejudices. Proposals were floated for a 'Conference of Nations' to meet annually to settle national disputes by arbitration, and for all English colonies to be self-governing. British campaigns in China and Afghanistan and those of France in Algeria were also condemned as unjust. Several small international organisations, notably the Democratic Friends of All Nations, founded in 1844, and the Fraternal Democrats, formed in 1845, also brought together foreign socialist groups for the first time, laying the foundations for the later International Working Men's Association.[102] By mid-century, a substantial literature circulated in working-class circles championing a cosmopolitan ideal juxta-posed to patriotism, 'the watchword of despotism', in the German radical Arnold Ruge's words, and aiming at the '*annihilation of Nationalities*'. Yet this ideal was perfectly capable of being united with the notion of a 'voluntary federation' of states, where nationalism could be applauded 'when it stands for the defence of the rights of one's own country, and stops at the limit where the rights of others begin'.[103] A similar confusion between cosmopolitan and internationalist ends, which eventually erupted into a passionate disagreement over nationalism, would mark later Victorian socialism.

Such internationalist sentiments were, however, largely directed only at uniting European workers, and mention was rarely made of British or other overseas possessions. When it was, Chartist leaders were sometimes sharply dismissive of the empire. Bronterre O'Brien, for instance, denied that the

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[99] See my 'Reciprocal Dependence, Virtue and Progress . . . 1790–1860', in Frits van Holthoon and Marcel van der Linden, eds., *Internationalism in the Labour Movement* (Leiden, 1988), pp. 235–58.

[100] *Republican* (Apr. 1885), 5.　　　[101] *An Address to the People of Canada* (*c.*1837).

[102] See Christine Lattek. 'The Beginnings of Socialist Internationalism in the 1840s', in van Holtoon and van der Linden, eds., *Internationalism*, pp. 259–82.

[103] *Cosmopolitan Review* (15 Feb. 1861), 5; (15 Apr. 1861), 97–8, 101.

working classes had any interest in defending India against Russia, and insisted the task be left to those who profited from it.[104] Opposition to Cobdenite non-interventionism was common, too; George Julian Harney complained that Cobden 'no more favours democracy than does Palmerston' for his unwillingness to support Hungary, and rejected non-intervention as impossible 'as long as despotism exists in Europe'.[105] While most later Chartists were not anti-imperial in principle, some presented significant criticisms of the way in which the empire was run. Regarding emigration as at best a necessary evil, Ernest Jones rejected as erroneous the 'entire system of colonial government', since every 'advantage derived from a colony would be derived from a free state'.[106] His *People's Paper* in 1853 condemned the 'extreme and scandalous profligacy' which 'beats the plunder … even of Imperial Rome' in creating India's enormous debt, and also urged the creation of some rudimentary parliamentary institution in India. In 1857 Jones supported the Indian uprising as 'one of the most just, noble, and necessary ever attempted', terming it 'not a military revolt, but a national insurrection'. He wrote a lengthy poem, 'The Revolt of Hindostan', in its defence. He also urged the restoration of Oude, whose annexation he saw as having instigated the rebellion. 'We do not say,' however, he added, 'abandon India. Some parts are so interwoven with European interests, as to admit of retention. But the confiscated principalities – the plundered kingdoms, let them be cautiously and prudently restored to their rulers.'[107] The young George Julian Harney, too, denied that 'the empire should be dismembered' merely because the rich chiefly benefited from it. Attacking the 'false philosophy' of the Manchester School for economising 'at a cost even of the dissolution of the empire', he even proclaimed the latter to be the 'rightful heritage' of the proletariat. Thus he insisted that the 'integrity of the British empire must be maintained' even if its government required reform.[108] And though he regarded Ireland as the 'Poland of the West' in the 1840s, Harney in May 1870 termed it 'an integral part of the British Empire'. (His change of heart evidently owed much to fearing that an independent Ireland would be dominated by priests.[109])

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[104] See Henry Weisser. *British Working Class Movements and Europe 1815–48* (Manchester, 1975), p. 83.
[105] *The Red Republican* (10 Aug. 1850), 59.
[106] Ernest Jones. 'Evenings with the People' (1857), in G. Claeys, ed., *The Chartist Movement in Britain* (6 vols., 2001), vol. VI, p. 276.
[107] *People's Paper* (7 May 1853), 1; (14 May 1853), 1; (5 Sep. 1857), 3; (1 Aug. 1857), 3; (23 Jan. 1858), 3.
[108] *The Red Republican* (31 Aug. 1850), 82; W. H. van der Linden. *The International Peace Movement 1815–1874* (Amsterdam, 1987), p. 427.
[109] A. R. Schoyen. *The Chartist Challenge* (1958), pp. 124, 277–8; *Documents of the First International … 1868–1870* (Moscow, 1967), p. 242.

Thanks to the efforts of David Urquhart, anti-Russian sentiment among Chartists was assiduously cultivated in 'Foreign Affairs Committees' first formed in the late 1830s and lasting to the 1890s. Urquhart upheld free trade principles, but opposed Whiggish adventurism in foreign policy, and linked imperial expansion to corruption. But he too was no enemy of empire as such, averring that 'our colonies are valuable to us', and that giving them up while retaining India would be 'a grievous mistake, and an impossibility'. There were some links between Positivism and the Committees. Comte's leading acolyte, Richard Congreve, noted approvingly in 1858 that the Sheffield Committee had written 'stating their acquiescence in the leading principles' of his pamphlet on India.[110] Russophobia was also intimately bound up with widespread working-class sympathy for continental nationalist movements, which produced near hero-worship of Mazzini and Kossuth in 1848, and Garibaldi a few years later.

We should also briefly note the efforts of various humanitarian movements active throughout the century which, while rarely explicitly anti-imperial in principle, were sometimes stridently critical of British policy.[111] The humanitarian critique tends to be associated with the first half of the century, and the anti-slavery campaign and Aborigines Protection Society, particularly in relation to Africa.[112] To William Wilberforce, the founder of the anti-slavery movement, the interests of the Indian empire lay 'very near my heart', but chiefly in so far as this concerned missionary activity. An empire based on slavery was 'founded in blood', but there was no difficulty in justifying shining Christian light upon the 'darkened land' of India.[113] Abolitionists thereafter may indeed have 'shown no particular fondness for imperialism', but they were also not amongst its most vociferous opponents.[114] The Aborigines Protection Society included Gladstone among its early adherents, and was highly critical of 'the progress of oppression in our colonies'. In 1837 it promoted the idea that 'the native inhabitants of any land have an incontrovertible right to their own soil', and condemned Europeans for having 'punished the natives as aggressors

[110] *Diplomatic Review* (6 Oct. 1869), 147–8; Congreve Papers, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Lett. c. 183. See Richard Shannon. 'David Urquhart and the Foreign Affairs Committees', in Patricia Hollis, ed., *Pressure from Without* (1974), pp. 239–61, and Miles Taylor. 'The Old Radicalism and the New: David Urquhart and the Politics of Opposition, 1832–1867', in Eugenio F. Biagini and Alastair J. Reid, eds., *Currents of Radicalism* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 23–43, here pp. 26–7.

[111] A useful overview is Andrew Porter. 'Trusteeship, Anti-Slavery, and Humanitarianism', in Porter, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume III: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 198–221.

[112] Philip D. Curtin. *The Image of Africa . . . 1780–1850* (1964), p. v. See generally Porter. *Critics*, pp. 21–5.

[113] William Wilberforce. *The Correspondence of Wilberforce* (2 vols., 1840), vol. II, p. 256; R. I. Wilberforce. *The Life of William Wilberforce* (5 vols., 1838), vol. II, p. 160; vol. III, p. 259.

[114] Howard Temperley. *British Anti-Slavery* (1972), p. 266.

if they have evinced a disposition to live in their own country'. Recognising that 'it may be impracticable to prevent the acquisition of lands by British subjects', it nonetheless insisted that those 'who embark in such undertakings do so at their own peril, and have no claim on Her Majesty for support in vindicating any titles they may so acquire'.[115] The Society was active into the early twentieth century, protesting in particular at British policy towards native Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders and Africans.[116] It has, however, been asserted that such humanitarian considerations had no impact on colonial policy after the late 1830s.[117] The literature on race extinction also does not usually link this issue to attitudes towards empire in general.[118]

A variety of peace and arbitration movements rose to prominence in the second half of the century, mounting major international meetings in London in 1843, Brussels in 1848, Paris in 1849 and Frankfurt in 1851.[119] Richard Cobden introduced a motion in Parliament favouring arbitration in 1849, and Henry Richard, leader of the Peace Society, founded by Quakers in 1816, followed suit in 1873, with the ultimate aim of disarming the civilised powers. Richard's approach to non-intervention paralleled Cobden's closely, as we will shortly see; with respect to Crimea, China in 1857, Persia in 1857, Italy in 1859, Denmark and Poland in 1864, and a host of further wars, he rejected British involvement in principle. He protested against the invasion of Egypt in 1882, and in the Sudan opposed both rescuing Gordon and stopping the Mahdist revolt.[120] He also condemned the taxation of India to pay for war in Burma. The Peace Society occasionally took up such issues, but was not anti-imperial as such, at least in terms of the informal hegemony of European Christian civilisation. Indeed at a meeting in 1843, William Sharman Crawford condemned 'the recent wars in China, Affghanistan, and Scinde' as 'gross violations of all equitable and Christian principles' in part because they were 'directly calculated to prejudice the reception of evangelical truth in those heathen nations'.[121] Many leading figures in this movement, notably Sir Henry Maine, were also

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[115] *Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes* (*British Settlements*) (1837), pp. v, 4; H. R. Fox Bourne. *The Aborigines Protection Society* (1899), p. 7.

[116] E.g., H. R. Fox Bourne. *'Civilisation' By War* (1905).

[117] John Galbraith. 'Myths of the "Little England" Era', *AHR*, 67 (1961), 43.

[118] See, e.g., Patrick Brantlinger. *Dark Vanishings. Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800–1930* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2003), esp. pp. 68–93.

[119] See Martin Ceadel. *The Origins of War Prevention … 1730–1854* (Oxford, 1996), Ceadel. *Semi-Detached Idealists … 1854–1945* (Oxford, 2000), and Paul Laity. *The British Peace Movement, 1870–1914* (Oxford, 2002).

[120] See Lewis Appleton. *Memoirs of Henry Richard* (1889), and Russell Lowell Jones. *International Arbitration as a Substitute for War between Nations* (1907).

[121] Quoted in van der Linden. *The International Peace Movement*, p. 417.

prominent imperialists. At mid-century organisations like the People's International League, founded in 1847 at Mazzini's instigation, promoted an ideal of the United States of Europe, including a common army. The League comprised a variety of radicals, Chartists and utilitarians, championed the causes of Swiss, Polish and Italian independence and the rights of nationality in principle, and insisted that 'we are bound to aid one another, as far as we are able, to put down anarchy and despotism, and to assist the cause of civilization, emancipation, and universal liberty'.[122] Other bodies active in this movement included the Workmen's Peace Committee, formed during the Franco-Prussian War, and the Workmen's Peace Association, which became the International Arbitration League.[123] The International Arbitration and Peace Association, founded in 1880, denounced British domination in Egypt, and suggested that the Suez Canal might be policed by the armies of minor nations.[124]

Cobden, Bright and the Manchester School

In the mid-Victorian period the leading proponents of the ideal of 'Little England' were usually supposed to be the great apostles of *Manchestertum*, Richard Cobden and John Bright. A Lancashire calico printer and Member of Parliament, with short interruptions, from 1838 to 1864, Cobden (1804–64) is primarily associated with the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846.[125] The principles of peace, retrenchment and free trade were for Cobden intimately linked. Free trade 'would unite mankind in the bonds of peace', and Britain's greatest problem, its growing indebtedness, could be overcome only by 'renouncing that policy of intervention with the affairs of other States which has been the fruitful source of nearly all our wars'. The chief objection to empire was thus its cost, both direct and indirect: 'armies and ships' could not 'protect or extend commerce', whilst 'the expenses of maintaining them oppress and impede our manufacturing industry'. Yet Cobden's reputation as a critic of colonialism and empire has been controversial, with some portraying him as having sought to preserve the empire, while Bodelsen and others

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[122] *Report of a Public Meeting … of the Peoples' International League* (1847), p. 1.
[123] Howard Evans. *Radical Fights of Forty Years* (1913), p. 113.
[124] *International Arbitration and Peace Association Monthly Journal* (1884), 2, 70.
[125] The basic source remains John Morley. *The Life of Richard Cobden* (2 vols., 1881). A recent re-evaluation is Anthony Howe and Simon Morgan, eds. *Rethinking Nineteenth-Century Liberalism. Richard Cobden Bicentenary Essays* (2006). See also David Nicholls. 'Richard Cobden and the International Peace Movement, 1848–53', *JBS*, 30 (1991), 351–76.

have disagreed.[126] Before considering this issue let us first examine his doctrine of non-intervention in greater detail.

The substance of Cobden's views on foreign policy was laid out in several early essays. *England, Ireland, and America* (1835) dismissed fears of Russian aggression and the need to maintain the 'balance of power', arguing instead that national strength rested on trade rather than expansion, which only entailed increased taxation without improving the balance of trade. The following year Cobden's pamphlet *Russia* (1836) dismissed the idea that Britain should intervene to protect Turkey from Russia, contending that even if 'Russia were to subjugate Turkey – England would gain rather than suffer by the event'. As insistently anti-Muslim as Urquhart was Russophobe, Cobden hoped that any European conquest might restore Christianity to Constantinople. Russian victory would bring Christianity and civilisation, abolish polygamy and slavery, and introduce a freer commerce. He similarly thought that Poland had prospered under Russian rule.[127] But his defence of Russian occupation there also brought stiff criticism from some labour papers.[128]

Cobden did not, however, lack sympathy for European nationalist movements. He simply believed that all interference, even for liberty against despotism, was ultimately counterproductive. 'Divine Providence', he proclaimed, would 'obviate this difficulty', and in any case 'the very process of injustice is calculated, if left to itself, to promote its own cure; because injustice produces weakness – injustice produces injury to the parties who commit it'.[129] Britain could best promote justice, therefore, by the force of example, 'striving to extend the sphere of liberty – commercial, literary, political, religious, and in all directions; for if he is working for liberty at home, he is working for the advancement of the principles of liberty all over the world'. But there were exceptions even to this rule. Cobden, for instance, opposed (referring to Russia) 'every loan advanced to a foreign Power to be expended in armaments, or for carrying on war with other countries'. A democrat, if no republican, though he admired the cheapness of American institutions and their promotion 'of strict economy, of peaceful non-interference, of universal education, and of other public

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[126] William Harbutt Dawson. *Richard Cobden and Foreign Policy* (1926), p. 32; Richard Cobden. *The Political Writings of Richard Cobden* (1886), pp. 104, 234; Cobden. *Speeches in Questions of Public Policy* (2 vols., 1870), vol. I, pp. 515–27; Rogers. *Cobden*, p. 224. See Bodelsen. *Studies*, pp. 33–4.

[127] Cobden. *Political Writings*, pp. 20, 24–5, 126, 26–7, 141–2, 174.

[128] E.g., *The Commonwealth* (4 Apr. 1857), 3. See also Lammer Moor. *Bowring, Cobden, & China: A Memoir* (1857), pp. 18–19.

[129] Cobden. *Speeches*, vol. II, p. 111; Dawson. *Cobden*, p. 106.

improvements', Cobden assumed 'constitutionalism' would triumph over continental feudalism. He was in this sense a cosmopolitan as well as an internationalist. But he would not admit that Britain had any 'right to interfere with any other form of Government . . . whether it be a republic, a despotism, or a monarchy', insisting indeed that if Britain were to 'take possession of a country, in order to impress your policy upon it . . . that becomes a tyranny of another sort'. He admired, he said, the Italians' and Hungarians' struggle for freedom; but what did that struggle represent? '"Leave us to ourselves," they say. "Establish the principle that we shall not be interfered with by foreigners."'[130]

The suppression of the Hungarian revolt was a particularly powerful test of these principles. Cobden was clearly moved by the seductive appeal of Kossuth's rhetoric, which attracted widespread working-class support in Britain. He became convinced that if Palmerston had protested against Russia's invasion of Hungary in 1849, and given 'moral power its only chance, by boldly proclaiming the right and justice of the Hungarians to settle their own domestic affairs', Russian ambitions might have been halted. Yet to apply the principle of non-intervention consistently was also, for Cobden, to reject appeals on the basis of nationality. In 1856 he thus dismissed both 'the line of our old aristocratic diplomacy in favour of the "balance of power" and dynastic alliances', and 'the more modern and equally unsound and mischievous line newly adopted by our so-called "democrats" on behalf of Mazzini and the "nationalities"'. In 1864 he even insisted that 'our Government should not lecture and talk to foreign countries about what policy they should pursue'.[131]

The greatest popular test of Cobden's stance came during the Crimean War. Again he insisted that he would 'never sanction an interference which shall go to establish this or that nationality by force of arms, because that invades a principle which I wish to carry out in the other direction – the prevention of all foreign interference with nationalities for the sake of putting them down'. But the war met with widespread popular support from those who saw it as 'a conflict out of which some good may arise to the oppressed nationalities'. Many radicals detested Russia as epitomising modern despotism, with the veteran Joseph Hume voting for the Army Estimates for the first time in his lengthy career. The war was widely supported by Chartists like William James Linton and the Fraternal

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[130] Cobden. *Speeches*, vol. II, pp. 353, 194; *Political Writings*, p. 103; *Speeches*, vol. II, pp. 225, 110, 226.
[131] John M'Gilchrist. *Richard Cobden* (1865), pp. 173–4; Morley. *Cobden*, vol. II, pp. 102–3, 171; Cobden. *Speeches*, vol. II, p. 352.

Democrats, who saw it as a means of freeing Italy, Poland and Hungary. Cobden's position was widely resented as hypocritical: freedom was a fine slogan for Manchester textiles, but was not itself for export. At the election of March 1857 Cobden at Huddersfield and Bright at Manchester lost their seats. On returning to Parliament in 1859, however, Cobden doggedly maintained the same position. When Palmerston and Lord John Russell urged intervention to protect Denmark against Prussia in 1864, he again reiterated his opposition to continental involvements.[132] During the American Civil War he upheld an 'honourable neutrality', even at the risk of preserving Southern slavery. Such arguments were often later portrayed as 'internationalist', in the sense of respecting the inviolability of national sovereignty. But Cobden could also yoke such arguments to Britain's national interest. In 1863, when insurrection broke out in Poland, he warned that 'very great injury could arise to ourselves' from interference, since Britain derived 'food for two or three millions of our people yearly from Russia'. In counselling the renunciation of Gibraltar, too, he proclaimed that upon 'no principle of morality' could its retention be justified. But he then proposed exchanging the territory for a commercial treaty with Spain.[133]

Respecting the settler colonies, as we have seen, Cobden denied that 'our colonies are profitable to us because they consume our manufactures', it being 'notorious that they do not buy a single commodity from us which they could procure cheaper elsewhere, whilst we take frequently articles from them of an inferior quality and at a dearer rate than we could purchase at from other countries'. This would remain his central contention respecting the colonies and empire. Trade with America, 'a colony emancipated', was in 1849 worth more than that of all the other colonies put together, India excepted, and cost nothing in naval protection. But how far did Cobden actually support 'separation'? His answer in 1849, particularly respecting Canada, which he believed would eventually amalgamate with the United States, was indeed to propose self-government for the colonies. Yet this did not imply independence as such: 'People tell me I want to abandon our colonies; but I say, do you intend to hold your colonies by the sword, by armies, and ships-of-war? That is not a permanent hold upon them. I want to retain them by their affections.' On a visit to Malta in 1837, too, he entered in his diary suggestions as to economies which might

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[132] Cobden. *Speeches*, vol. II, p. 6; *The Commonwealth* (10 June 1854), 740; Morley. *Cobden*, vol. II, pp. 443–4.

[133] Dawson. *Cobden*, p. 112; Morley. *Cobden*, vol. II, p. 404; Cobden. *Political Writings*, p. 200.

'add to the power of the British empire'. Elsewhere he concluded, like J. A. Roebuck, that 'the greater the amount of local self-government, and the less the Colonial Office interferes in the internal affairs of the colonies, the more economically and the better the colonies will be governed'.[134]

Outside of Europe and the settler colonies, Cobden's views were also controversial. He was long critical of Britain's incursions into China, which he described in March 1857 as 'as dishonourable to us as a nation as were the proceedings in Spain in the times of Cortes and Pizarro'. But it was India which, as for so many, presented a special difficulty. In 1850 he wrote to Bright that the 'world never yet beheld such a compound of jobbing, swindling, hypocrisy, and slaughter, as goes to make up the gigantic scheme of villainy called the "British rule in India"'.[135] In a pamphlet, *How Wars Are Got Up in India* (1853), he denounced the conquest of Burma. Britain had no interest in India, he asserted, 'except by the commerce we carry on there'. Its presence was 'a perilous adventure, quite unconnected with Free Trade, wholly out of joint with the recent tendency of things, which is in favour of nationality and not of domination'. He cautioned that 'we cannot leave a more perilous possession to our children than that which we shall leave them in the constantly-increasing territory of India'.[136] But while assailing Britain's 'insatiable love of territorial aggrandisement', he did not counsel withdrawal from India as such, only warning that a 'rude shock to the fabric of our Indian finance' might eventually occur. If reform was possible, he suggested, involving the natives in the administration would be a good starting-point, for the latter were 'well fitted to hold the higher class of offices'.[137]

During the Mutiny, Cobden wrote to Joseph Sturge that if he 'were one of the natives, I would be one of the rebels', and told his father that British rule could only be maintained 'at a vast sacrifice of life and treasure, *and in the end India will be governed by Indians*'.[138] 'Hindoostan', he insisted, 'must be ruled by those who live on that side of the globe. Its people will prefer to be ruled badly – *according to our notions* – by its own colour, kith and kin, than to submit to the humiliation of being better governed by a succession of transient intruders from the antipodes.' Yet Cobden confessed that he

[134] Cobden. *Political Writings*, p. 150; Cobden. *Speeches*, vol. I, p. 486; Morley. *Cobden*, vol. I, p. 86; F. W. Hirst, ed. *Free Trade and Other Fundamental Doctrines of the Manchester School* (1903), p. 434 (1848). See John Arthur Roebuck. *The Colonies of England* (1849).

[135] Cobden. *Speeches*, vol. II, p. 114; Donald Read. *Cobden and Bright* (1967), pp. 205–6.

[136] Cobden. *Speeches*, vol. II, pp. 357–8, 397–8.

[137] Cobden. *Political Writings*, pp. 452, 455; Cobden. *Speeches*, vol. II, p. 389.

[138] Quoted in Nicholas C. Edsall. *Richard Cobden* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), p. 313; Francis Hirst. *In the Golden Days* (1947), p. 50.

saw no choice but to suppress the revolt even if it was 'no longer a mutiny, but a rebellion and civil war', and even if the result would be only 'undisguised despotism ... a calamity and a curse to the people of England'. He warned in 1858, too, perhaps with Burke in mind, that he feared, like the Greeks and Romans, 'our national character is being deteriorated, and our love of freedom in danger of being impaired' by playing 'the part of despot and butcher' in India. Elsewhere he added that 'is it not deplorable that we English, directly we get east the Cape of Good Hope, lose our morality and our Christianity?'[139] In 1860 he repeated his 'despair' at the entire issue of British rule in India. Yet this, again, did not constitute hostility to empire in principle, or a deep-rooted sympathy with conquered peoples as such. Indeed he even wrote in 1859 that 'if France took the whole of Africa, I do not see what harm she would do us or anybody else save herself '.[140]

Cobden's views were frequently linked to those of the Rochdale Quaker millowner John Bright (1811–89), who also commenced his career in the Anti-Corn Law League. In his domestic economic policy Bright alienated many working-class supporters through his refusal to support the Factory Acts, particularly the Ten Hours' legislation. As President of the Board of Trade, he defended adulteration as a legitimate form of competition. Like Cobden, Bright resisted foreign interference as such, upheld the principle of non-intervention wherever Britain's interests were not directly threatened, and wedded a fervent belief in free trade principles to promoting peace. Like Cobden, Bright linked these ideals to Britain's national interest. It was, indeed, the problem of securing an adequate cotton supply for Lancashire which first excited his interest in India. He agitated vainly in 1847–8 for a Royal Commission to investigate increasing Indian cotton production, and consequently was accused of having a 'vested interest' in retaining India.[141] Bright in 1853 proposed replacing the East India Company with an Indian Secretary of State and a council of five responsible to Parliament.[142] He complained that year of the high levels of taxation in India, in some cases amounting to 60–90 per cent of gross agricultural produce, while still insisting that India derived 'enormous advantages from her connexion

[139] Morley. *Cobden*, vol. II, pp. 206–7, 210, 361, 212–13, 216–17; Cobden. *Speeches*, vol. II, p. 113. On a defence of 'Englishness' as a unifying factor amongst anti-imperialists, see Mira Matikkala. 'Anti-imperialism, Englishness and Empire in late-Victorian Britain', University of Cambridge PhD thesis, 2006, pp. 106–87.

[140] Dawson. *Cobden*, p. 200; Morley. *Cobden*, vol. II, pp. 360, 242.

[141] E.g., C. C. Eldridge. *British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (1984), p. 179.

[142] James Sturgis. *John Bright and the Empire* (1969), pp. 19–20, 35; John Bright. *Speeches on Questions of Public Policy* (2 vols., 1868), vol. I, p. 50.

with this Empire, where Government was based upon experience, civiliza-
tion, and justice'.[143] When the Mutiny occurred Bright was still out of
Parliament. But he believed that a reform of Indian policy was possible,
writing in 1857 that

What we want for India is a total change of ideas and policy – no more conquest –
no more fraudulent annexations – a prudent use of revenue, with a view to afford
relief to the overtaxed cultivators, and some great act which shall give to the people
an ownership in the land, and a security in its possession.[144]

Returned to Parliament again in 1858, Bright urged the replacement of
the Governor-General and promoting natives in five devolved presidencies.
He lamented the 'great impoverishment' and 'great suffering' of the peas-
antry, and described Indian taxes as 'more onerous and oppressive' than
those anywhere else. The cost of administration he estimated in 1858 as
approximately £30 million per year, the same amount as the gross revenue.
But to the charge that he wished to 'give up India', he responded in 1877:
'"No." I do not say anything of the kind, but I think it would be worth while
to become a little more rational about it.' Instead he accepted 'that pos-
session as a fact. There we are; we do not know how to leave it, and therefore
let us see if we know how to govern it.' If Britain could educate the people of
India and govern them wisely,

gradually the distinctions of caste will disappear and they will look upon us rather as
benefactors than as conquerors. And if we desire to see Christianity, in some form,
professed in that country, we shall sooner attain our object by setting the example
of a high-toned Christian morality, than by any other means we can employ.[145]

After Cobden's death, Bright redirected his efforts towards parliamentary
reform and land reform in Ireland. He supported coercive legislation in
Ireland in 1881, a 'terrible blow' to his admirers, and voted against Home
Rule there in 1886. Protestantism may have been a factor here, but Bright
clearly did not see Ireland as part of the empire in the same sense that India
was. He urged British neutrality during the Franco-Prussian War. His
interest in India declined in the 1870s, though in 1883 he helped found an
informal committee of some fifty MPs willing to address Indian issues
sympathetically. When the Eastern Question arose again in 1876 he pro-
moted neutrality vis-à-vis Russia and Turkey. He broke with Gladstone

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[143] Quoted in Sturgis. *Bright*, p. 38.
[144] William Wedderburn. *Allan Octavian Hume* (1913), pp. 92–4; Herman Ausubel. *John Bright* (1966),
pp. 68, 90.
[145] Bright. *Speeches*, vol. I, pp. 41, 57, 33; George Barnett Smith. *The Life and Speeches of the Right
Honourable John Bright* (2 vols., 1881), vol. I, pp. 280, 269–70.

over the invasion of Egypt in 1882, resigning from the Cabinet; Bright's terse diary entry was that he 'could be no party to invasion or occupation of Egypt'.[146] But it has been observed respecting this episode that 'when they were once there, Bright was not bound by any general principle of action to which he had ever committed himself to call for withdrawal'. Bright thought, however, that it was rivalry with France which provoked the move, specifically asserting that 'our Government does not care much about the English bondholder'.[147] Remaining in Egypt thus could be construed as in the national interest. As in India, therefore, once occupation was a *fait accompli*, Bright did not vehemently oppose its continuance.

Like Cobden, Bright's view of colonies and the empire was essentially that of a Quakerish free trader: they did not pay, and they promoted warfare. Like Cobden, he proclaimed that he had 'sympathy with all oppressed nationalities, but it was not his duty to make this country the knight-errant of the human race, and to take upon herself the protection of the thousand millions of human beings who had been permitted by the Creator of all things to people this planet'. Bright clearly supported self-government for mature, settler colonies, and the charge of advocating separation has been associated in particular with his position respecting Canadian defence in 1865. But he here pursued a cautious line, insisting that he had 'no dread of separation but I would avoid anything likely to provoke it'. He was also reluctant to extend Britain's commitments further into West Africa, writing in 1873 that 'the interests and the honour of the country at some not distant time would be best consulted by an entire withdrawal from that coast'.[148]

There were thus divergencies in the emphases Cobden and Bright brought to colonial and imperial questions. To Trevelyan, 'Bright, though vigilantly critical of our rule in India, throughout his life took a more active and hopeful interest in its prospects than Cobden was ever able to do.' A later study contends that 'Bright never went so far as Cobden in his condemnation of the colonial system [and] was much less radical in colonial affairs than was Cobden.'[149] Both upheld an anti-aristocratic radicalism rooted in free trade principles; neither necessarily represented Nonconformity or Gladstonian liberalism as such. Cobden believed that an aristocratic foreign policy nullified the naturally pacific effects of the

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[146] *The Radical* (12 Mar. 1881), 5; Sturgis. *Bright*, p. 73; John Bright. *The Diaries of John Bright* (1930), p. 483.

[147] C. A. Vince. *John Bright* (1898), p. 181; Smith. *Bright*, vol. II, p. 287.

[148] Smith. *Bright*, vol. I, p. 218; Sturgis. *Bright*, pp. 102, 109; Eldridge. *England's Mission*, p. 38.

[149] George Macaulay Trevelyan. *John Bright* (1913), p. 262; Sturgis. *Bright*, p. 183.

extension of free trade. Bright, too, in 1858 echoed James Mill in describing the empire as a 'gigantic system of outdoor relief for the aristocracy of Great Britain'.[150] But historians have also noted Cobden's growing antagonism to the financial interests of the City of London, which he felt in 1849–50 in particular was too willing to help Austria and Russia raise large loans which would only be used to suppress freedom.[151] The seeds of a later explanation of empire had thus already been sown.

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt: Islamic and Irish nationalism

No account of the sources of British anti-imperialism would be complete without some scrutiny of the extraordinary philo-Islamist and Irish nationalist Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1840–1922).[152] Born to a life of privilege, Blunt moved easily in Establishment circles all his life, and shared their common view, as late as 1875, of England's 'providential mission in the East'. An orphan, raised as a Catholic, Blunt married Byron's grand-daughter, Lady Annabella Noel, and, retiring from the diplomatic service, embarked on a series of horseback journeys in the mid-1870s through Spain, North Africa, the Middle East and Arabia. His sympathy with the Arab peoples, and a chance meeting with the Persian ambassador in 1880, engendered a growing hostility to imperialism. A sense of his own 'mission in the Oriental world' followed, eventually extending to the 'cause of the backward nations of the world'.[153] Positivist influences – he had known a leading devotee of Comte's, Vernon Lushington, 'one of the very best of men', since childhood – may have entered in. Blunt's disenchantment at British greed and cynicism deepened; with his first encounter in India 'my faith in British institutions and the blessings of British rule ... received a severe blow'. Liberty of thought, he admitted, had given the country a capacity for change which 'the ancient order of Asiatic things' had lacked. But he now rejected European efforts at civilising 'improvement', insisting instead that '*all* nations were fit for self-government'. This did not mean that democracy suited all, however, and Blunt maintained instead that in 'all Eastern

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[150] Jonathan Parry. *The Politics of Patriotism ... 1830–1886* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 9, 48, 388; Bright. *Speeches*, vol. II, p. 382.

[151] See Peter Cain. 'Capitalism, War and Internationalism in the Thought of Richard Cobden', *BJIS*, 5 (1979), 229–47.

[152] The sole study of Blunt's work as such is Mary Joan Reinehr. *The Writings of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt* (Milwaukee, 1941). This section draws on my 'The "Left" and the Critique of Empire, *c.* 1865–1900', in Bell, ed., *Victorian Visions*, pp. 244–52.

[153] Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. *The Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt* (1907), pp. 9, 85; Edith Finch. *Wilfrid Scawen Blunt 1840–1922* (1938), pp. 67, 257, 115.

countries, it is the educated class whose special function is to control the ruler'.[154] Soon he contended that 'the only true humanity towards the negroes of Equatorial Africa would have been to have left them unvisited, uncivilized, and severely alone with their own local troubles'. By 1900, lamenting the 'moral degradation' empire had induced, he concluded that 'we should hide our heads in shame, if we had any national conscience after these hundred years of violent fraud and crime'. Eventually he would suggest that Britain's invasion of Egypt in 1882 led to the First World War by forcing Britain and France in 1904 into the Entente Cordiale, which Germany felt compelled to resist.[155] The exploitation of India – the chief justification in turn for the occupation of Egypt – had for Blunt thus cost Britain dearly.

Though Blunt never became a Muslim, being hindered by 'the incredulity of my reason', he did come to view Africa's 'only chance' as embracing Islam to avoid its being 'absorbed by Europe'.[156] He achieved renown by championing Arabi's short-lived resistance to Britain's occupation of Egypt in 1882, and has been described as having originated the 'bondholder' hypothesis to explain it.[157] He also made an abortive attempt to negotiate between the Mahdi, whose movement he considered 'the most important there has ever been in Africa', and Tennyson's 'warrior of God', Gordon.[158] Blunt produced over the course of some thirty years an exceptionally detailed, critical narrative of British imperial policy, more sweeping in its scope and relentless in its condemnation than anything outside Positivist circles. His *Ideas about India* was described as furnishing 'conspicuous illustrations of keen insight into the real relations between England and India'. Leading members of government termed him 'a considerable authority on Asiatic matters'.[159] His 'Secret History' became the basis for much subsequent writing on Egypt in this period.[160]

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[154] Blunt. *The Land War in Ireland* (1912), p. 15; Blunt. *Secret History*, p. 62; Earl of Lytton. *Wilfrid Scawen Blunt* (1961), p. 162; Blunt. *Secret History, Part II. India* (1907), p. 154; Blunt. *The New Situation in Egypt* (1908), p. 11.

[155] Blunt. *Gordon at Khartoum* (1911), p. 98; Blunt. *The Shame of the Nineteenth Century* (1900), pp. 6, 4; Finch. *Blunt*, p. 146.

[156] Blunt. *Secret History, Part II. India*, p. 18; Blunt. *The Land War in Ireland*, p. 194.

[157] A. G. Hopkins. 'The Victorians and Africa: a Reconsideration of the Occupation of Egypt, 1882', *JAH*, 27 (1986), 365.

[158] Blunt. *Secret History, Part II. India*, p. 502.

[159] Sir Henry John Stedman Cotton. *New India or India in Transition* (1904), p. 165; Edward Walter Hamilton, *The Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton* (Oxford, 1972), p. 28. Hamilton was Gladstone's private secretary at the time.

[160] E.g., M. Travers Symons. *The Riddle of Egypt* (1913).

Blunt's politics are often labelled 'Conservative'; 'Conservative Nationalist' was his own preference. But such a description hardly does justice to the subtlety and complexity of his anti-imperialist outlook, and the virulence of his condemnation of that 'demoralisation which spread to all classes in England from the highest to the lowest, and which, by the violence of its injustice in the rush for wealth, obliterated all distinction between right and wrong in the minds of our people'. This he thought had originated 'in financial speculations, mainly of Hebrew origin', first encouraged by Disraeli.[161] Blunt's 'Toryism', as defined in May 1885, when he flirted with Lord Randolph Churchill's coterie of Tory Democrats, included supporting the Established Church and House of Lords, and opposing secular education and land nationalisation, while upholding greater popular access to the land as 'in the truest sense, a Conservative measure'. Respecting Ireland, where he was imprisoned for three months for calling an illegal meeting, Blunt was a nationalist and Home Ruler; here Roger Casement was a friend. In India he supported 'large reforms in the direction of self-government', and all who aided that cause, including Hindu assassins. His broader perspective in international relations stressed the need for 'plain dealing and respect for international law [which] makes special alliances and secret treaties impossible'. He rejected not only what he regarded as Gladstone's betrayal of such principles, but equally 'the Manchester doctrine which allows injustice to weaker nations in the interests of finance and trade' while benefiting only Britain. In Europe, Britain could maintain its insular position while strengthening its navy. But in Asia, so long as India remained British, the assistance of an 'alliance of the Mohammedan nations against Russia' was requisite. This provided the political basis of Blunt's pan-Islamist principles, and his vehemently pro-Egyptian stance against Anglo-French domination.[162]

Both Blunt's Catholic background and his sympathy for Islam played a major role in his outlook on empire.[163] Christianity he felt 'acknowledged at least this right to the weak races of mankind, that they had their place in the general scheme of things and equality in God's sight with the most efficient'. The Egyptian cause, too, he thought stood 'on a common footing of enlightened humanity, and of that adherence to religious tradition which I held to be essential in every well-ordered community'.[164] His interpretation

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[161] Lytton. *Blunt*, pp. 184–5.   [162] Blunt. *Gordon at Khartoum*, p. 610.
[163] When Michael Davitt termed himself a 'Christian Socialist', Blunt's response was that he was 'a religious Socialist, for I include the people of the East' (*The Land War in Ireland*, p. 93).
[164] Finch. *Blunt*, p. 171; Lytton. *Blunt*, pp. 196–7.

of Islam stressed progress towards peace and 'a universal brotherhood proclaimed between the nations and the creeds'. Once committed to 'the Cause of Islam as essentially the "Cause of Good" over an immense portion of the world, and to be encouraged, not repressed, by all who cared for the welfare of mankind', Blunt's course was firmly set. Terming Urquhart 'the first exponent of Mohammedanism to Englishmen', Blunt accepted his mantle; later T. E. Lawrence in turn would pay him homage.[165] (However, eventually disillusionment did set in, compelling Blunt reluctantly in 1897 to conclude that 'there is *no* hope anywhere to be found in Islam ... The less religion in the world perhaps, after all, the better.'[166]) As these sentiments broadened, and his travel extended, Blunt became convinced that relations between the British and native peoples were deteriorating, principally through 'race hatred', a term he applied equally to Ireland.[167] This he thought had been fuelled by a crude Social Darwinism, which led the rule of the 'survival of the fittest' to be 'seized on eagerly by our imperialist politicians as a new argument in favour of their political ambitions'.[168]

Blunt also feared the consequences of the empire for Britain itself. Warning that if Britons did not 'divest ourselves of our overgrown overseas Empire and devote our naval and military resources to the defence of our own shores ... we shall perish, as the Roman Empire perished, by trying to hold too much', he insisted that it was 'impossible to exercise tyrannical authority abroad and retain a proper respect for the dignity of liberty at home. The two things are not permanently compatible.' So, too, he argued not only that Britain 'run on lines of speculation which is often sheer gambling' had 'lost the sense of all economy in its finances, and all moderation in its spendthrift ways', but that

perhaps the most dangerous feature of it all – the vanity of imperialism, of being members of an imperial caste, is rapidly teaching Englishmen to rely, wherever possible, for their living upon the labour of others rather than their own. The great Crown Colonies, the Indian Empire, and the South African federation are all slave communities in disguise, where white men do not work themselves but live by 'native' labour.[169]

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[165] Blunt. *Secret History*, pp. 100, 121; Blunt. *The Future of Islam* (1881), p. 135.
[166] Finch. *Blunt*, pp. 299–300.
[167] See especially Blunt. *India under Ripon* (1909), pp. 255–77.
[168] Blunt. *The Land War in Ireland*, pp. 297–8. On the Darwinist underpinning of imperialist argument see, e.g., J. L. Hammond. 'Colonial and Imperial Policy', in F. W. Hirst *et al.*, *Liberalism and the Empire* (1900), p. 171.
[169] Blunt. *My Diaries ... 1888–1914* (2 vols., 1919), vol. I, p. 1; Blunt. *Gordon at Khartoum*, pp. x–xi; Blunt. *My Diaries*, vol. II, p. 240.

Blunt's critique of empire was expressed in a remarkable series of writings. His first major work, *The Future of Islam* (1881), promoted his 'supreme confidence in Islam, not only as a spiritual, but as a temporal system'. 'The Mohammedan creed', he contended, 'must be treated as no vain superstition but a true religion, true inasmuch as it is a form of the worship of that one true God in whom Europe, in spite of her modern reason, still believes.' If 'legal equality must now be accorded to Christians living under Mohammedan law', and 'conformity, on the other hand, in certain points to foreign law must be allowed to Moslems living under Christian rule', a *modus vivendi* could be established which would accommodate both peoples. Yet to Blunt there were limits to toleration, too. To bring social customs into closer proximity 'slavery must, by some means, be made illegal; and a stricter interpretation of the Koranic permission be put on marriage, concubinage, and divorce'.[170] After visiting India in 1879, following a devastating famine, Blunt published *Ideas about India* (1885), which he proclaimed was 'the first complete and fearless apology of Indian home rule'. It detailed the excessive taxation of the land, the opulence of the British ruling class, living at five times the standard of living it could expect at home, the oppressive weight of debt, and the anguish of widespread hunger induced by agricultural mismanagement. But if reform of the civil service took place, along with the further admission of Indians to its ranks, and the gradual introduction of local parliamentary institutions – precisely what the utilitarians and most other Britons denied was possible – and political and financial power were decentralised, the preconditions for nationhood could be formed.[171] This analysis was continued in Blunt's *Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt. Part II. India*, written in 1895, and extended further in *The Land War in Ireland* (1912), in which Blunt noted that, like Egypt, Ireland faced 'the same unscrupulous gang of financiers, property holders, mortgage companies, and speculators. Money is lord of these islands and will have its way in Ireland too.'[172]

Blunt's campaign brought him into contact with both Positivists and socialists. Meeting one of Comte's leading acolytes, Frederic Harrison, Blunt found him a 'thoroughly honest good fellow', made earnest efforts to convert him to Egyptian nationalism, and came to regard him as 'the soundest and most courageous man on foreign politics then in the Liberal party'. Both contributed to Arabi's defence. In 1892 Harrison told Blunt that 'he had been converted to Islam as a living religion, and offered to

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[170] Blunt. *The Future of Islam*, pp. ix, 142, 154, 166–7.
[171] Blunt. *Ideas about India* (1885), pp. vii, 163.　　[172] Blunt. *The Land War in Ireland*, p. 22.

support my candidature if I would come forward as a Mohammedan at the elections'. Harrison stayed with Blunt at Cairo in 1895, where he was amused by the latter's wholesale adoption of Arab 'dress, habits, and mode of life', and astonished to find that he had only to 'say "Blunt" at the Railway Station in Cairo' and 'they all jump up & show their joy & rush to kiss your boots'.[173] Both supported Home Rule, though Blunt commented that Harrison 'thinks, nevertheless, that Ireland would some day or other get its independence, while I maintained that the tendency of progress was towards the amalgamation of nations, not their separation'. Periodically they met to discuss Egypt, India, the Congo, the Transvaal; divided, Blunt once wrote, by 'his creed of Humanity and mine of anti-Humanity' (meaning unwillingness to accept the Positivist religion), but united in 'the principal wish of both of us ... to see the break-up of the British Empire'. Blunt occasionally contributed to the *Positivist Review*, which at his death termed him 'the steady friend of righteousness among the nations, the defender of Arabi, the champion of Egyptian and of Irish nationality. In these causes he was found constantly working side by side with Positivists.' Lecturing to the latter with Blunt present, Harrison praised his work on Egypt, to cheers from the audience. A breach between them would come only in 1909, when 'Harrison and I diverged from what had for twenty-seven years been a common political sympathy about foreign affairs into antagonism, his path being towards war with Germany, mine towards a gradual shedding of our "white man's burden" in Egypt and India.'[174]

Socialist writers also readily acknowledged Blunt's endeavours; C. H. Norman later noted that his 'unwearied campaign ... on behalf of Egypt and other States, has always commanded our sincere admiration'. Amongst their number, it was William Morris, whom he first met in 1883 and for whom he confessed that he 'had a feeling' in 1887,[175] whom Blunt came to know best. Morris thought Blunt curious, but admired anyone willing to 'attack those base ruffians the Cotton-jingoes', Blunt having in an election address publicly repudiated *Manchestertum* as a policy solely designed to defend trading and financial interests.'[176] They became well

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[173] Blunt. *Secret History, Part II. India*, p. 315; Finch. *Blunt*, p. 156; Frederic Harrison. *Autobiographic Memoirs* (2 vols., 1911), vol. II, p. 165; Francis Sydney Marvin Papers, Bodleian Library, d. 253.

[174] Blunt. *My Diaries*, vol. I, pp. 65–6, 233; *PR*, 16 (1908), 281–4, and 30 (1922), 196–7; Blunt. *My Diaries*, vol. II, pp. 19, 240. Congreve noted in 1886 that 'Blunt's book has this advantage that it comes from another school or quarter is not a positivist utterance but yet supports the general conclusions we seek to implement' (Add. MS 45,263, ff. 48–9).

[175] C. H. Norman. *Empire and Murder* (1906), p. 3; Lady Gregory. *Seventy Years: Being the Autobiography of Lady Gregory* (1974), p. 230.

[176] William Morris. *Collected Letters*, ed. Norman Kelvin (4 vols., Princeton, 1987), vol. II, p. 458.

acquainted only in 1889, when Blunt found Morris 'in a mood of reaction from his socialistic fervour'. They had much in common, thought Blunt, notably that 'both of us sacrificed much socially to our principles, and our principles had failed to justify themselves by results, and we were both driven back on earlier loves, art, poetry, romance'.[177] In fact both were also wealthy, idiosyncratic, experimental and intensely individualistic. As their friendship grew there is no doubt each contributed something to the other's world-view: Blunt spoke of 1888 as marking 'the beginning of Morris's influence over me', though he could not accept Morris's view that 'socialism and nationalism have nothing in common'.[178] By 1891 he thought that Morris now had 'found his Socialism impossible and uncongenial, and has thrown it wholly up for art and poetry, his earlier loves. I fancy I may have influenced him in this.'[179] If this exaggerates, Morris – whose own youthful politics were Tory and high church – indisputably shared many values congenial to Blunt's conservatism, and their romantic temperaments clearly meshed well. Morris mentioned Blunt a number of times in various newspaper articles, chiefly in relation to Ireland, where he recommended Gladstone adopt his views.[180]

After Morris's death Blunt's chief connection with socialism was through H. M. Hyndman, whom he first met at length in 1897, and later described as 'the only man, of those who know about India, who is willing to do anything positive'. Though he refused point blank to join Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation, Blunt wrote in 1903 that he was 'as a rule ... in sympathy' with its view of imperialism, certainly more than with the Fabians, whom he described as supporting 'merely socialism without the few humanitarian virtues which commonly go with it, without romance and without honesty of principle, only opportunism'. But there were disagreements with Hyndman too. In 1910 Blunt recorded having

discussed the prospects of Socialism and how it would affect Imperial questions, and I told him I believed it would be just as bad for the subject races in Asia under a Socialistic régime in England as now. This he would not agree to, but he did not

[177] Blunt. *My Diaries*, vol. I, p. 23. See generally Peter Faulkner. *Wilfrid Scawen Blunt and the Morrises* (1981).

[178] Jane Morris. *The Letters of Jane Morris to Wilfrid Scawen Blunt* (Exeter, 1986), p. 21; Blunt. *My Diaries*, vol. I, pp. 52–3; Faulkner. *Blunt*, p. 17. Thus Morris misunderstood Ireland in Blunt's eyes, because he 'did not care for the Irish movement except so far as it goes against property. Nationalism he cares nothing about' (quoted in *The Letters of Jane Morris*, p. 13).

[179] Blunt. *My Diaries*, vol. I, p. 57.

[180] William Morris. *Journalism. Contributions to Commonweal 1885–1890* (Bristol, 1996), pp. 49, 68, 301–2, 346.

convince me I was wrong. 'We are National too,' he said, 'as well as International and have no wish to go on preying on the Asiatics.'

Hyndman would later write approvingly of Blunt's attack on Morley's policies in Egypt, Ireland and India.[181] It is certainly plausible to suggest, too, that Hyndman pushed Blunt towards an acceptance of revolutionary means to accomplish anti-imperial ends. In 1885, when he first engaged with the Irish issue, he did not support violence; by 1912, here, he did. By 1908, too, he felt 'that India will get nothing except, as Gordon said, by revolution'.[182] A curious brand of Toryism, this.

Bradlaugh and later radicalism

We should also recall briefly that various radicals, republicans and free-thinkers promoted a Cobdenite opposition to imperial excess later in the century. The blind Postmaster-General, Henry Fawcett, sometimes called the 'Member for India', spoke on Indian questions from July 1867. He connected the value of Indian securities to the assumption that the government protected investment there, which was tantamount to the government giving 'guaranteed interest on capital'. He also asserted that Britain's government was 'far too expensive for so poor a country'.[183] Fawcett regarded oversight of Indian affairs as 'probably the most sacred and the most important' duty incumbent on Parliament. Richard Congreve hoped that he might lead 'an inquiry into the whole Indian question'. But while he was highly critical of the Indian budget in the early 1870s, he urged 'wise administration and by rigid economy', not withdrawal.[184]

Intermittent criticism also emanated from various other groups. Organisations like the National Secular Society protested against war in the Transvaal in 1881.[185] The radical press occasionally took up imperial questions as well. *The Radical* in 1881 pronounced that 'India, as well as Ireland, is entitled to Home Rule, and unless we can devise some means of sticking

[181] Sydney Carlyle Cockerell. *Friends of a Lifetime: Letters to Sydney Carlyle Cockerell*, ed. Viola Meynell (1940), p. 178; Lytton. *Blunt*, p. 115; Blunt. *My Diaries*, vol. II, pp. 28, 293; H. M. Hyndman. *The Record of an Adventurous Life* (1911), p. 233.

[182] Lytton. *Blunt*, p. 179.

[183] Henry Fawcett. *Speeches on Some Current Political Questions* (1873), pp. 33–4, 38; Fawcett. *Indian Finance. Three Essays* (1880). For Fawcett's views on India see Leslie Stephen. *Life of Henry Fawcett* (1886), pp. 341–401, John Wood. 'Henry Fawcett and the British Empire', *IESHR*, 16 (1979), 395–414, and Sumanta Niyogi. *India in British Parliament, 1865–84* (Calcutta, 1986).

[184] Henry Fawcett. *Essays and Lectures on Political and Social Subjects* (1872), p. 312; Ingram Papers, D2808/12/1; Fawcett. *Speeches*, p. 46.

[185] *The Republican* (Mar. 1881), 285.

together to the federal principle, we must be content to let them both go. The question is not Home Rule or no Home Rule, but Home Rule or the disintegration of the Empire.' George Standring's *Republican*, too, in 1884 assailed the jingoism of Britain's Egyptian policy, denounced 'the bondholders, in whose interest the war was undertaken', and called British actions 'utterly at variance with true Liberalism; nay, it is a flagrant violation of the international law'. A variety of radical liberals also waded into the fray at various points without ever becoming central figures in the growing debate. Herbert Spencer came to the conclusion during the Boer War that not only was an imperial society 'necessarily a militant society', but that 'in proportion as liberty is diminished in the societies over which it rules, liberty is diminished within its own organization', a process he termed 're-barbarization'.[186]

At various points several other notable parliamentary radicals also gained some reputation as critics of imperial policy. Amongst these were Henry Labouchere, a leading opponent of annexation in the 1890s, champion of the 'bondholder' interpretation of the Egyptian occupation and supporter of both Egyptian and Irish Home Rule (though he wished to retain India); William Harcourt; and John Morley, though we do not have space to explore these strands of liberalism and radicalism here.[187] The most prominent such radical critic in this period was the republican and freethinker, Charles Bradlaugh, also called the 'Member for India', who, from 1886 to 1891, after Fawcett's death, became the chief defender of Indian causes in Parliament.[188] Bradlaugh had been a champion of Hungarian, Polish and Italian independence after 1848. During the Franco-Prussian War he co-operated with Positivists in supporting France. In 1883 he spoke out on the issue of British rule in India, but insisted that if Britons should be 'heartily ashamed' at the way in which India had been acquired, they might 'redeem our past' and 'make our Indian fellow-citizens desirous of being governed by us'. His remedy was to encourage greater native participation in government, as promoting 'the fullest right of self-government, in course of time'. Bradlaugh upheld the cause of native rulers, and criticised the misapplication of famine relief funds. He

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[186] *The Radical* (29 Jan. 1881), 1; *The Republican* (Apr. 1884), 3; Herbert Spencer. *Facts and Comments* (1902), pp. 113–14.

[187] For Labouchere see R. J. Hind. *Henry Labouchere and the Empire 1880–1905* (1972), esp. pp. 14–36. A large holder of Egyptian stock, Labouchere first supported intervention, then changed his mind (ibid., pp. 148–9). On Harcourt, see A. G. Gardiner. *The Life of Sir William Harcourt* (2 vols., 1923); and on Morley his *Recollections* (2 vols., 1917). For the later period see Edward C. Moulton, 'British Radicals and India in the Early Twentieth Century', in A. J. A. Morris, ed., *Edwardian Radicalism 1900–1914* (1974), pp. 26–46.

[188] Bradlaugh's paper, the *National Reformer* (1860–93), contains little mention of imperial affairs prior to this.

condemned the annexation of Upper Burma as 'in the highest degree unjust and indefensible', and spoke up for 'the imprisoned Maoris, the unfairly-treated Basutos, and the inhabitants of the Transvaal'.[189] His work in Parliament was often informed by William Digby, who believed that the condition of India had deteriorated significantly under British rule.[190] Britain was 'draining India, not simply of its surplus, but of its very life-blood', one in six of the population verging on starvation, and Digby followed Bright's plan for a system of self-contained Presidencies rather than an empire as such, while opposing complete separation because British interests were too enmeshed.[191] Bradlaugh also supported the Indian Congress movement, speaking at Bombay in 1889, when he praised 'our empire – yours and mine, not mine against yours, not English against Indian, but a common empire to be maintained for common interests'.[192] It was later claimed by a Congress supporter that until 'Mr Bradlaugh . . . befriended our cause, with his characteristic unselfishness, all our pathetic appeals for a forward step, in the direction of reforming our Legislative Councils, remained a veritable cry in the wilderness'.[193] Yet Bradlaugh, too, did not oppose empire as such. He disagreed with the acquisition of shares in the Suez Canal by the government, for instance, but then conceded the need to maintain it as a passage to India.[194] He hoped that 'Radicalism' would curtail imperial adventurism, asserting that 'in Egypt and Burma we have drifted into inglorious and costly operations which might have been avoided if previous Parliamentary consent had been needed'. He supported 'open advocacy of justice for the Irish' and Gladstone's Home Rule proposals. But he insisted that 'federation, not separation . . . should be the hope of the future'.[195]

CONCLUSION

This chapter has very cursorily sketched a broad spectrum of positions in some measure critical of imperial expansion, or at least its excesses,

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[189] Charles Bradlaugh. *Appeal to the Electors* (1886); *NR* (16 Nov. 1873), 211; Bradlaugh. *Speeches by Charles Bradlaugh* (1890), pp. 31, 36–7, 45; *Our Corner* (1887), 3; *NR* (5 Nov. 1882), 316.

[190] William Digby. *India for the Indians – And for England* (1885), pp. 62–83. But he opposed separation from England (pp. 199–206). See Mira Matikkala. 'William Digby and the Indian Question', *Journal of Liberal History*, 58 (Spring 2008), 12–21. Bradlaugh and Digby's extensive correspondence is in the William Digby Papers, MS Eur. D. 767/7.

[191] William Digby. *Indian Problems for English Consideration* (1881), p. 46; Digby. *India for the Indians*, pp. 199–206; Digby. *British Rule in India* (1891), pp. 4–7.

[192] Bradlaugh. *Speeches*, p. 153.   [193] W. C. Bonnerjee, ed. *Indian Politics* (Madras, 1898), p. 53.

[194] *NR* (16 Jan. 1876), 33–4.

[195] Bradlaugh. *The Radical Programme* (1889), p. 4; Bradlaugh. *The Autobiography of C. Bradlaugh* (1891), pp. 26, 31.

stretching across the course of the nineteenth century. As we saw earlier, it is difficult to determine the depth or popularity of such sentiments through much of this period. Hyndman later recalled of the colonies that 'in the sixties all parties were for letting them go'. Similarly the Fabian William Clarke wrote later that Cobdenism 'stormed successfully the citadel of liberalism and held it for a whole generation', only to be supplanted by a more interventionist trend 'taking up the thread of the Chartist movement'.[196] But the 'peer relief' theory of empire mooted by James Mill had clearly by the early 1880s begun to give way to a more laudatory view of empire, just as economic pressure began to provide new justifications for expanding markets and sources of investment. To these developments a new generation of critics would respond, of whom the most important initially, and to whom we now turn, were the Positivists.

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[196] *Justice* (4 July 1903), 4; William Clarke. 'The Influence of Socialism on English Politics', *PSQ*, 3 (1888), 556–7.

Positivist diplomacy

COMTE, HUMANITY AND EMPIRE

It was one of Comte's most signal contributions to human order and progress that more than sixty years ago he summoned the citizenship of Europe to deliver itself from this ancient incubus of empire, and fulfil itself within the limits of the true city … He was, if ever a man was, in the higher sense of the word, a patriot. He loved France with a love which many of his critics have denounced as excessive. He made for her a claim which most other countries would consider extravagant. Yet as a boy he openly applauded the resistance of the Spaniards to Bonaparte, and as a man he as openly declared that if the French did not honourably restore Algiers to the Arabs, he hoped the Arabs would rise and drive them out of the country.[1]

From that day to this we have cried aloud to our countrymen to respect international morality; in books, in pamphlets, in placards, in addresses, in speeches, in sermons, on platforms, and in pulpits, in newspapers, and in meetings, in the press, and in society. In India, China, Japan, Afghanistan, Burmah, New Zealand, Jamaica, in Zululand, in the Transvaal, in Abyssinia, in Egypt, in the Soudan, we have urged the claims of morality and peace, against aggression and Empire. Were we right or wrong? Have we spoken in vain to the conscience of Englishmen? I think not. The cause has in practice been betrayed; but the principle of international duty, international morality, is at least acknowledged by the conscience of our time.[2]

We saw in the Introduction that while isolated sentiments of cosmopolitan and internationalist anti-imperialism appeared in the early nineteenth century, no systematic, widespread and theoretically significant expression of this ideal emerged outside of what free trade liberalism often ambiguously provided. The school founded by Auguste Comte (1798–1857), known as Positivism, however, was to provide an influential if surprisingly neglected critique of empire for more than half a century.[3]

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[1] Malcolm Quin. *The Politics of the Proletariat* (1919), p. 63.
[2] Frederic Harrison, *New Year's Address, 1887* (1887), pp. 8–9.
[3] The standard modern biography, still incomplete, is Mary Pickering. *Auguste Comte*, which asserts that the Saint-Simonian Bazard probably first used the term 'positivism' (p. 424). Contemporary accounts of Positivism include Edward Caird. *The Social Philosophy and Religion of Comte* (2nd edn, Glasgow,

Little studied today, and lambasted by Hayek and others in the mid-twentieth century as a proto-totalitarian, Comte was once admired as 'one of the greatest minds of modern France'.[4] His classification of the sciences, philosophy of history and epistemology attracted fulsome praise from, among others, John Stuart Mill, who none the less dissented from what he saw as Comte's unduly despotic politics, and John Morley, who described his system as essentially 'utilitarianism crowned by a fantastic decoration'.[5] Comte's vision rested upon his analysis of secularisation and industrialism. Following his 'spiritual master', Condorcet, and then Henri de Saint-Simon, whose assistant he was from 1816 to 1822,[6] Comte explained the growing secularisation of intellectual development largely in terms of a law of three stages of the growth of knowledge: religious, metaphysical and positive. Thereafter his chief goal in social theory was, following Saint-Simon, to describe a new science which explained the emergence of industrial society, which he first called social physics, then (coining the term) sociology. Comte described the process of

1893), John K. Ingram. *Human Nature and Morals According to Auguste Comte* (1901) and John McGee. *A Crusade for Humanity. The History of Organized Positivism in England* (1931). Comte's thought is surveyed in L. Levy-Bruhl. *The Philosophy of Auguste Comte* (1903), and more recently in Andrew Wernick. *Auguste Comte and the Religion of Humanity* (Cambridge, 2001), which locates Comte nearer to socialism than has been usual (pp. 9–11), and Mike Gane. *Auguste Comte* (2006). Walter Simon's *European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1963), pp. 202–38, ignores foreign policy entirely (see also Simon. 'August Comte's English Disciples', *VS*, 8, 1964, 161–72). This is superseded by the meticulous account in T. W. Wright's *The Religion of Humanity: the Impact of Comtean Positivism on Victorian Britain* (Cambridge, 1986), which makes excellent use of manuscript sources, though it too largely neglects imperialism. James M. Murphy's 'Positivism in England … 1840–1870' (PhD thesis, Columbia University, 1968) concentrates on Mill, Lewes and Martineau, and deals with foreign policy only in passing (pp. 117–20). Paul Adelman's 'The Social and Political Ideas of Frederic Harrison … 1855–1886' (PhD thesis, University of London, 1977) also largely ignores foreign and imperial policy. Positivism is briefly discussed in Porter's *Critics*, pp. 158–9. See also Royden Harrison. *Before the Socialists. Studies in Labour and Politics 1861–1881* (1965), and Christopher Kent. *Brains and Numbers. Elitism, Comtism, and Democracy in Mid-Victorian England* (Toronto, 1978). On the religious aspects, see Gladys Bryson. 'Early English Positivists and the Religion of Humanity', *ASR*, 1 (1936), 343–62, and Warren Sylvester Smith. *The London Heretics* (1967), pp. 84–103. This chapter generally follows the contemporary distinction, not always applied, between Comtists, who were more deferential to the master and considered it 'necessary to put into practice all the minutiae of Comte's religious and social formulas', and Positivists, who adopted a more latitudinarian view of the doctrine. See the *Bee-Hive* (17 June 1871), 6, and the similar contrast drawn by Stanton Coit in *EW* (15 Mar. 1909), 33–4.

4 Friedrich Hayek. *The Counter-Revolution of Science* (Glencoe, Ill., 1952), p. 138; J. Alexander Gunn. *Modern French Philosophy* (1922), p. 33. For Comte's praise of liberty of thought and speech as 'essential to' Positivism, see *A General View of Positivism* (Paris, 1848), pp. 218–19.

5 John Morley. *Critical Miscellanies* (3 vols., 1886), vol. III, p. 378. Mill's charge, made in *Auguste Comte and Positivism* (1865), was denied by Comte's British followers; e.g., J. H. Bridges. *The Unity of Comte's Life and Doctrine* (new edn, 1910), pp. 44–5.

6 Auguste Comte. *Early Essays on Social Philosophy* (1911), pp. 178–86. It was often assumed that Comte adopted the idea of an international federation from Saint-Simon (e.g., J. M. Robertson. *The Meaning of Liberalism*, 1912, p. 160).

industrialisation as naturally pacific, but requiring the rational reorganisation of society. Temporal power would pass to the industrialists, including engineers and scientists. Feudal militarism would be superseded, while the working classes' standard of living would be greatly improved, with housing and secure employment provided. Secular power in each state was to be led by a triumvirate of bankers initially installed by a dictator, and heading departments of agriculture, manufactures and commerce.[7] Increasingly, Comte conceived that a spiritual motive to serve the public good was required which would function as a counterweight to egotistical individualism and 'universal materialism'. Fascinated by Cromwell, Comte became persuaded of the 'radical superiority' of the English to the French Revolution, for it recognised that 'the Western Revolution could not be really closed but by a new religion', a conclusion associated with Bonald and adopted by many leading Saint-Simonians at the same time.[8]

Comte's new religion was none the less godless, and instead grounded in a psychology of natural affections. Following the Austrian anatomist Franz-Joseph Gall, Comte posited the existence of altruistic or social instincts – attachment, veneration and humanity – which necessarily focused on three respective concrete objects, the family, the nation and humanity. (The latter was also identified with the Church, as united by faith.) Attachment operated with greatest efficacy in marriage and the family, where the transition to altruism began. Veneration had a 'far wider scope', with 'voluntary submission' as its 'essential characteristic'. It was 'principally manifested towards superiors', forming 'a natural transition between individual Attachment and universal Love'. The latter feeling in turn could be extended from 'the love of the tribe or community to the widest patriotism, or to sympathy with all beings who can be brought to share a common life'. Such a system, Comte believed, had already been demonstrated in medieval Catholicism, which also admirably separated temporal and spiritual power.[9] But this had degenerated greatly, and its theological basis was unsustainable. The spiritual substitute for this now defunct Christianity Comte by the mid-1840s termed

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[7] The scheme as interpreted in Britain is described in S. H. Swinny. 'Comte's View of the Future of Society', in Dorothea Hollins, ed., *Utopian Papers* (1908), pp. 102–20, and Alfred H. Haggard. *Principles of Positivism* (1931), pp. 12–13. In the *Principles* Comte initially suggested the three leaders might be drawn from the working classes (vol. I, pp. 307–8), with the assembly chiefly composed of capitalists. In vol. IV they are bankers (pp. 301, 390).

[8] Auguste Comte. *The Eight Circulars of Auguste Comte* (1882), p. 85; *Passages from the Letters of Auguste Comte* (1901), p. 26.

[9] Auguste Comte. *The Catechism of Positivism* (2nd edn, n.d.), p. 169; *System of Positive Polity* (4 vols., 1875–7), vol. I, pp. 567–8; vol. III, pp. 307–8; *A Discourse on the Positive Spirit* (1903), p. 99.

the 'Religion of Humanity'.[10] This was to be guided by a new priest-hood, or spiritual power, living in colleges, and trained in science, but without celibacy. A 'pontiff' or 'grand Prêtre de l'Humanité' would reside in the Positivist mecca, Paris, which all the Temples of Humanity would face, with each of the five leading European states, collectively termed the 'Western Republic', having its own 'chief priest'. The force of the 'personal instincts' would be much mitigated by having basic wants much better satisfied. The instilling of 'the continuous subordination of egoism to altruism' as encapsulated in the phrase '*Live for Others* … the simplest summary of the whole moral code of Positivism', would be the principal task of the new religion.[11] This would be accomplished, in a process not dissimilar to Thomas Carlyle's hero-worship, by cultivating a sense of reverence for and emulation of past individuals who had made notable contributions to human welfare, through repeated collective acts of historical remembrance which would instil 'a spirit of humility, springing from a more thorough knowledge of the extent of our obligations'.[12] To assist this a new calendar was introduced to facilitate heroic commemoration, with year one of the Positive era being 1789, and the months being renamed after famous men, beginning with Moses, Homer and Aristotle (the chief omissions were Jesus Christ, regarded by Comte as a charlatan, and Bonaparte, the incarnation of militarism). In British hands this conception of Humanity, too, would meld increasingly from the 1860s onwards with the language of Darwinism, until it could be described in 1880 as 'a being of special and unique nature, an organism of which we know no second example. For it is the organic union of all those countless human lives and deeds, which over myriads of years have had a share in the regular evolution of the human race.'[13]

[10] The phrase was originally popularised by Thomas Paine (*Writings*, 4 vols., 1894–6, vol. I, p. 274), and used in France by Pierre Leroux by 1838.

[11] Comte. *Catechism*, p. 47; *System*, vol. II, p. 123; *Appeal to Conservatives* (1889), pp. 64–5 (written in 1855); *System*, vol. I, p. 566. This, for Bridges, demonstrated for Comte 'the subordination of the Intellect to the Heart, the subordination of Politics to Ethics – that is, of material civilization to noble and upright life' (*Illustrations of Positivism*, 2nd edn, 1915, p. 295). The five nations were France, Britain, Italy, Spain and Germany.

[12] Henry Ellis. *What Positivism Means* (1887), p. 9. Parallels are explored here with Carlyle, some of whose heroic pantheon the Positivists, however, rejected; Bridges thought 'most men agree to reprobate' Napoleon (*Illustrations of Positivism*, p. 225). Positivists also suggested that individuals add their own names; F. J. Gould proposed Marx (*The Calendar of Humanity*, 1909, p. 6). Even Hayek grudgingly acknowledged that the scheme did not lack 'a certain greatness' (*Counter-Revolution*, p. 184).

[13] Frederic Harrison. *The Present and the Future* (1880), pp. 42–3.

As early as 1826, in keeping with Saint-Simon's interests in promoting pan-European government, Comte called for a much wider extension of European international regulation, united by 'the feeling of a common Occidentality', under the general superintendence of the spiritual authority.[14] Like Condorcet, who had written against the subject as early as 1781, he vehemently opposed slavery, and urged compensation to enable freed slaves to establish a new homeland in the Americas.[15] A proposed Council of Positivists was eventually to include delegates from Haiti and Africa as well as Turkey, India, China and Japan. In the interim, Comte's policy generally entailed non-intervention. It did not reject the superiority of 'civilisation', but denied the right of imposing it upon others. This 'relativism', Comte stressed, was integral to an altruistic outlook. Positivists would

leave the Asiatic tribes, and even those of Eastern Europe, to work out for themselves their preparatory conditions, and enter into the most advanced, as the circumstances of a future age shall determine. It is not our business to decide by anticipation what that preparatory course must be, nor when it shall terminate; nor to suppose that each race or nation must imitate in all particulars the mode of progression of those which have gone before. Except for the maintenance of general peace, or the natural extension of industrial relations, Western Europe must avoid any large political intervention in the East.[16]

A crucial component in the formation of Positivist anti-imperialism was its philosophy of history and commitment to the Religion of Humanity, which predisposed it to acknowledge the virtues of other religions as well as the essential unity of humanity.[17] Comte thought Positivism had 'points of sympathy of which Catholicism would not admit' with Islam, which had transmitted Greek science to medieval Europe.[18] He also accorded much greater respect to Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism than was

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[14] Comte. *General View*, p. 94; *Early Essays*, p. 328. Saint-Simon had proposed a European parliament, initially two-thirds British and one-third French, to arbitrate national disputes. See his *Reorganisation of European Society* (1814). He believed 'European patriotism', the 'more universal outlook and a broader sentiment', would underlie a more unified system (*The Political Thought of Saint-Simon*, ed. Ghita Ionescu, Oxford, 1976, p. 89).

[15] See Ingram. *A History of Slavery and Serfdom* (1895), pp. 200–1.

[16] Comte. *General View*, p. 436; *Appeal*, p. 149; *The Positivist Philosophy of Auguste Comte* (2 vols., 1853), vol. II, p. 491.

[17] Cf. J. H. Bridges: 'This discovery of a natural law of growth in human beliefs made it possible for the first time to sympathize fully and deeply with the religions of the past' (*Essays and Addresses*, 1907, p. 43).

[18] Comte. *General View*, p. 435. Saint-Simon had presumed that Christianity would become 'the universal and only religion. Asia and Africa will be converted' (*Social Organization, the Science of Man, and Other Writings*, New York, 1964, p. 85). Comte even asserted that the 'morality of Islam is not inferior in power to that of Catholicism, and its dogmas are less repulsive to the reason' (*System*, vol. II, p. 93).

common in this period. Given its many affinities with his own ideals, the 'fetichistic' stage of religious development – he had briefly embraced it himself during his own spiritual crisis in 1826 – might, Comte thought, easily be assimilated to Positivism, facilitating its acceptance in turn in India and China, where ancestor worship was potentially proto-Positivist.[19] At the same time, however, Comte expected that the nations of the West would play a crucial role in regenerating the world, led by an alliance between England and France.[20] This would involve the spiritual 'presidency' of Positivism, as a British follower put it. Recognising all 'faiths as natural and necessary phases of human evolution and spontaneous affluents of the final religion' or 'universal faith' would help forge an alliance of all who 'accepted the principle of the separation of the Powers'. Eventually the nations of the world would flow subtly into one another, 'harmonised' by integration, and one language – Comte plumped for Italian 'as the most musical' – would succeed the modern Babel.[21]

From the late 1840s onwards this cosmopolitan ideal took on increasingly anti-imperialist overtones. For Condorcet the principle of nationality had implied the renunciation of conquest, and Comte followed suit. In an 1849 lecture he suggested that Britain abandon what he referred to as '*l'injurieuse anomalie*' of Gibraltar. He was surprised when an English listener – Richard Congreve – retorted that a British manufacturer – evidently Cobden – had recently urged a similar course.[22] But Comte's position was equally comprehensive respecting the French empire. 'There must be a noble restoration of Algeria to the Arabs', he urged, 'to mark the definitive adoption of a thoroughly pacific policy.' Such accessions had commenced 'in order to rekindle the warlike feeling; to cultivate outside France a ferocious temper to be used in France; above all to corrupt the French nation, in order to divert it from social objects by interesting it in a retrograde tyranny'. This was equally true for Corsica and France's other colonies, as of British India, while the West Indies would be given wholly to freed slaves. Comte wrote,

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[19] Comte. *System*, vol. III, pp. 63–129; Vernon Lushington. *The Day of All the Dead* (1883), pp. 14–15. Tönnies cited Comte and his followers approvingly as having 'made China appear to be a model of spiritual and moral government' (G. Spiller, ed. *A Record of the Proceedings of the First Universal Races Congress*, 1911, p. 234).

[20] Comte also thought this would destroy 'the theological submission and the aristocratic prestige which are the two principal bases of the British system' (*Appeal*, p. 17).

[21] J. K. Ingram. *Outlines of the History of Religion* (1900), p. 153; Comte. *System*, vol. II, pp. 377–8, vol. IV, pp. 66–7.

[22] Comte. *Lettres à des Positivistes Anglais* (1889), p. 40, writing to John Fisher; Cobden. *Political Writings*, pp. 200, 226; Comte. *System*, vol. IV, p. 430; Add. MS 45,259, f. 10. Cobden thought strong ports like Gibraltar might be placed under the control of some European League (Morley. *Cobden*, vol. I, p. 106).

thus, that Britain had to abjure the notion that it should 'govern the human race'. And it was to be in Britain, indeed, that Comte's anti-imperialism would most fully flourish.[23]

Comte's scheme for curtailing empire had an overtly republican basis, morally, psychologically and institutionally, which modified its cosmopolitanism significantly.[24] The future was to be defined by fashioning some five hundred lesser states (seventy in the West) of one to three million persons out of 'the necessary decomposition of the overgrown national aggregates'. France, for example, would be subdivided into seventeen entities. This was rooted in Comte's psychology: the spirit of union as focused on the small state appealed, as Henry Ellis put it, 'to man's sympathy and energies on behalf of something nobler than the interests of the narrow family group, and so helping to raise him to a consciousness of his duty to humanity'. But this would be ineffective if states were 'too large to inspire a genuine sentiment of affection and devotion'. Thus while patriotism remained 'indispensable to the complete development of the social instinct, which it alone can preserve alike from the narrowness of family feeling and the vagueness of philanthropy', states were required none the less 'to reduce their respective territories as the persistence and intensity of the civic bond shall demand'.[25] Only thus, as Frederic Harrison later

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[23] Comte. *System*, vol. IV, pp. 364, 453, 409, 448; Gould. *Auguste Comte* (1920), p. 83. There is little doubt that the British Positivists were consistently more anti-imperialist than their French counterparts. Congreve, for instance, complained in 1884 that while Comte's physician, Dr Robinet, criticised French colonialism, the 'Laffitte party … expresses no disapprobation' of it, which Congreve regarded as 'incompatible with any growth of true Positivism' (Add. MS 45,262, f. 153). Robinet was praised in 1882 for opposing French expansion in Africa and South-East Asia (LPC. *Report for the Year 1883*, 1884, p. 10). See his *La politique positive et la question tunisienne* (Paris, 1881). The Positivist engraver Thomas Sulman similarly lamented in 1895 that most of the inner Positivist circle at 10 Rue Monsieur Le Prince were happy enough to see France regain its position in Europe and refused to join condemnations of expansionism (Ingram Papers, D2808/50). Bridges badgered Laffitte regularly over the issue in the late 1870s and early 1880s, accusing him in 1881 of 'ceasing to resist' imperialism (Bridges to Laffitte, 1 Feb. 1881, MAC, folder 3), while Beesly said he had 'stimulated chauvinism & colonial expansion instead of following the precepts of A. Comte' (to Constant Hillemand, 25 Oct. 1898, MAC). Matters finally came to a head in December 1884 when six London Positivists wrote collectively to Laffitte complaining of his 'complete silence' on the Chinese question, and arguing that while their own promotion of 'internationality' had been substantial, 'their efforts have been inevitably frustrated when their compatriots have seen their French confrères not accompanying them' (9 Dec. 1884, MAC). Various later French Positivists were overtly pro-imperial; see, e.g., the account of African colonisation in *La Philosophie Positive*, 30 (1883), 249–75.

[24] A feature generally ignored in studies of nineteenth-century international theory; e.g., Nicholas Greenwood Onuf. *The Republican Legacy in International Thought* (Cambridge, 1998). It is taken up in Duncan Bell. 'Republican Imperialism: J. A. Froude and the Virtue of Empire', *History of Political Thought*, 30 (Spring 2009), 166–91.

[25] Comte. *System*, vol. IV, pp. 269, 309, 365, 409; Ellis. *What Positivism Means*, p. 12; Comte. *Catechism*, p. 234; *Appeal*, pp. 91–2.

explained, could 'the standard and opinion of their immediate fellows and class ... the opinion of the immediate community in which he lives' provide 'an enormous force, in which self is lost and ennobled'. Citizenship in great conurbations like London, echoed Joseph Kaines, was impossible; only when 'the aggregates are broken up' would 'a lost sense ... be restored – the sense of being a citizen', and with this would 'come also self-respect and much else very unfamiliar to us now'. And the feeling of national unity was, even more than that of domestic unity, reliant on that sense of the 'sufficient convergence of past generations' which the Religion of Humanity provided. Here we see a significant development upon Saint-Simon's cosmopolitanism, in which higher forms of executive power were expected to supersede national institutions, based essentially upon the idea of the rationality of a larger economic scale, a position adopted by various later socialists, including Marx.[26]

We need not be detained by any further scrutiny of Comte's system, for our concern here is with how Britons applied it to foreign affairs. The 'majestic efforts of M. Auguste Comte and his English followers' in proposing a 'complete scheme of general European policy', as the jurist Sheldon Amos put it, did not go unnoted.[27] It was not until the late 1840s, however, that Comte's vision began to attract British followers. Here, we will see, while its attempts to create a new religion met with perhaps 'more ridicule, contempt, and discredit than any vagary of human imagination in our day', Positivism made a significant impact on ideas of foreign policy over some eighty years.[28] Though a 'small drawing-room would assuredly have held all the London Positivists who made themselves effective in English politics', still they became 'something of a power in the land', in the words of the Irish nationalist and historian Justin McCarthy, adding that 'their public influence has been almost wholly for good'. The socialist H. M. Hyndman went even further, asserting that 'I question if, in modern times, a small band of highly educated men, who professed and vigorously preached an unpopular doctrine, ever had so great an

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[26] Harrison. *The Present and the Future*, p. 38; J. Kaines. *Seven Lectures on the Doctrine of Positivism* (1880), p. 100; [Henry Dix Hutton]. *Humanity* (Dublin, 1880), p. 12; Saint-Simon. *Political Thought*, p. 43.

[27] Sheldon Amos. *Remedies, Political and Legal, for War* (1880), pp. 134–5.

[28] Justin McCarthy. *Reminiscences* (2 vols., 1899), vol. II, p. 206. Harrison felt that Congreve's presentation of Positivism as Comte's 'new revelation' greatly undermined 'the acceptance of rationalist Positivism' (*Autobiographic Memoirs*, 2 vols., 1911, vol. I, p. 351). One result, said Edward Beesly, was that even 'those who virtually embrace Comte's philosophy are careful to dissociate themselves from his name and even to heap ridicule upon it in order to avoid the suspicion of being his disciples' (to Constant Hillemand, 10 Mar. 1898, MAC).

influence.'[29] For a church dedicated to unity, however, there was very little of the quality on display. Contemporaries divided the Positivists into two groups, those who admired 'the master's' sociology and the principles of the *Philosophie Positive*, but rejected his 'scheme of sacerdotal despotism' or religion, like Mill, George Eliot, Harriet Martineau and George Henry Lewes, editor of the influential *Fortnightly Review*; and those willing to embrace the Religion of Humanity.[30] The majority, Harrison's 'brethren', according to Justin McCarthy, took the former view.[31] The most sectarian branch of the minority, led by Congreve, 'the smallest church in London', with meetings averaging fewer than five in attendance in the 1870s,[32] was so prone to splitting that it was mocked for arriving in one cab and leaving in two. But it too had admirers, often themselves heading towards or away from Catholicism, like G. K. Chesterton, who thought the religion vastly superior to Comte's philosophy.[33] And within it a deep reverence – indeed worship – for the past was combined paradoxically with an extraordinarily stubborn, sometimes eccentric, disdain for conventionality.

Led by the Wadham College quartet of Richard Congreve (1818–99), Edward Spencer Beesly (1831–1915), Frederic Harrison (1831–1923) and John Henry Bridges (1832–1906), the British Positivists thus clearly had an intellectual impact far surpassing their numbers. As one observer later put it, 'most of the free-thinking men of that period read the "Positive Polity" and the other writings of the founder, and spent some Sunday mornings at the little conventicle in Lamb's Conduit Street, or attended on Sunday evenings the Newton Hall lectures of Frederic Harrison'.[34] For a time Positivism produced 'a deep influence over a certain class of intellectual

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[29] McCarthy. *Reminiscences*, vol. II, p. 221; *Justice* (15 July 1915), 6.

[30] G. H. Lewes. 'Auguste Comte', *FR*, 3 (1866), 385–410, here 404. See Edwin Mallard Everett. *The Party of Humanity ... 1865–1874* (Chapel Hill, 1939), pp. 74–105. Mill's essay on the 'Utility of Religion' none the less so manifestly praises a 'Religion of Humanity' like Comte's, in part for its linkage to patriotism, that he must be ranked amongst its supporters, if not indeed equally a champion of the Positivist line on patriotism (*Nature The Utility of Religion and Theism*, 1874, p. 109).

[31] Marcella M. Carver. *A Positivist Life*, 1976, p. 58. '[N]ineteen out of every twenty of the English followers of Comte ... accepted the philosophy as grand, scientific, inexorable truth [and] rejected the religion with pity or with scorn, as a barren and fantastic chimera' (McCarthy. *Reminiscences*, vol. II, p. 206). Yet the line between philosophy and religion, we will see, is thinner than is readily apparent.

[32] *PR* (1920), 200; LPS Papers, 1/1. At its peak, however, attendance of more than a hundred at Sunday services was reported (in July 1899; Ingram Papers, D2808/3).

[33] See G. K. Chesterton. *Heretics* (1905), pp. 95–8.

[34] Edward R. Pease. *The History of the Fabian Society* (1925), pp. 18–19. For Graham Wallas, Comte's key achievement was denying Bentham's psychological principle that 'man from the very structure of his nature prefers his own happiness to that of all sensitive beings put together' (*The Great Society*, 1914, p. 120).

men and women in England, and indeed it was not possible to go into intellectual society anywhere without finding some of Congreve's followers eager to advocate his doctrines'.[35] Branches were founded in Liverpool in 1880, and Newcastle, north London and Manchester by 1884.[36] As Duncan Bell has shown, even such sceptics as John Seeley worried that Positivism might well become a 'new orthodoxy' through the absence of any alternative. Through Beesly, friend of Marx and founding member of the International Working Men's Association, the first meeting of which he chaired, as well as Harrison, this influence also extended beyond middle-class public opinion some distance into the working classes.[37] And this, too, was part of Comte's grand scheme, for the *proletariate*, where 'the new philosophers will find their most energetic allies', was destined to play an essential role in social progress.[38]

In this chapter we will examine Positivism's views on foreign and particularly imperial policy. It will be argued here that as early as the 1850s the British Positivists (not *English*; we will soon see why this is a misnomer) had a methodical, systematic approach to international relations in which the abandonment of empires played a central role. As much as popularising Comte's philosophy, this became a leading emphasis of his British followers, with the Positivist Society even proclaiming in 1882 that 'the establishment of an international policy based on morality is the most immediate need of our time'.[39] Though Comte's acolytes also supported popular European nationalist causes, such as Poland,[40] some forms of European nationalism disturbed them. Their hostility towards the British empire was to prove far more controversial, forcing them into a mentality of permanent opposition which rankled even their friends.[41] Concentrated in the pronouncements of the Positivist Society, founded in 1867 and led by

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[35] Justin McCarthy. *A History of Our Own Times* (7 vols., 1908), vol. VII, p. 74.

[36] *NR* (4 Nov. 1888), 295.

[37] Bell. *The Idea of Greater Britain*, p. 152; Harrison. *Before the Socialists*, pp. 311–12; Royden Harrison. 'Professor Beesly and the Working Class Movement', in Asa Briggs and John Saville, eds., *Essays in Labour History* (1967), pp. 205–41; Stephen Coltham. 'The Bee-Hive Newspaper', in Briggs and Saville, *Essays*, pp. 174–204; Royden Harrison. 'E. S. Beesly and Karl Marx', *IRSH*, 42 (1959), 22–58, 208–38. Marx exempted Beesly alone from his otherwise 'entirely hostile opinion' towards Comtism (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. *Collected Works*, vol. XLIV, 1989, p. 150).

[38] Both having 'the same sense of the real, the same preference for the useful, and the same tendency to subordinate special points to general principles. Morally they resemble each other in generosity of feeling, in wise unconcern for material prospects, and in indifference to worldly grandeur' (Comte. *General View*, p. 142).

[39] *Positivist Comments on Public Affairs* (1892), p. 20.

[40] See, e.g., Beesly. *Some Public Aspects of Positivism* (1881), p. 19.

[41] John Morley would retort irritatedly to Harrison: 'Fred, do you think we are never right then?' (Austin Harrison. *Frederic Harrison*, 1927, p. 16).

Beesly from 1879 to 1901, this principled opposition to empire, often the leading theme in the Society's annual New Year's address, helped form a powerful undercurrent of anti-imperial sentiment which gained increasingly in prominence between the Crimean and Boer wars.

We will see that the Positivists were especially concerned initially with two geographical areas which merit particular attention here, India and Ireland. To these would be added in the early 1880s a third, Egypt. From their scrutiny of these cases would emerge their own analysis of the causes of and solution to imperialism. Normatively, this rested, it will be contended, on two arguments: one rooted in republicanism, the other in a broader 'humanitarianism' (a term also applied disparagingly by its opponents). Its solution to imperialism was intertwined, it will be argued, with the Religion of Humanity's respect for earlier forms of religious expression. Harrison, for instance, celebrated events from the Islamic calendar at the Positivists' Newton Hall meeting place, while Bridges made efforts to involve Muslims in the ceremony.[42] Harrison acknowledged Mohammed as 'one of the four chiefs of the initial theocracies', and praised the Koran as possessing 'the grandest possible conception of monotheism; sublime poetry; and noble morality'. A month of worship was also devoted to Fetichism, with which Positivism had a 'profound affinity', with four festivals commemorating the 'taming of animals, the invention of fire, the worship of the Sun, as the prime regulator of the Seasons and of social institutions, and the use of Iron for weapons of war and for implements of industry'. In their education Positivist offspring were to progress through the historical sequence of beliefs, reaching polytheism in puberty.[43] Such apparently eccentric views, we will see, in fact provided the essential grounding for the Positivist idea of the unity of humanity, which in turn was the basis of its anti-imperialism. To condemn the Religion of Humanity while applauding Positivism's anti-imperialism is thus to misunderstand fundamentally the interdependence of these ideals.

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[42] Harrison. *Memoirs*, vol. II, p. 145; Malcolm Quin. *Memoirs of a Positivist* (1924), p. 84; Bridges to Laffitte, 14 June 1881, MAC folder 3. Bridges said of Islam: 'devotion, resignation of our own will to the supreme decree … the devotion of our life to the highest', and that there was 'no fitter word for the religion of the human race' (*Essays and Addresses*, pp. 7–8). He also singled out Islam for a special defence in 1894, arguing that whatever divided the European powers in Africa, 'it is precisely against Mahommedanism that every section of the European invaders of Africa, missionaries, merchants, and military adventurers, are now agreed to fight' (*PR*, 1894, 23).

[43] Frederic Harrison. *The Creed of a Layman* (1907), p. 131; Comte. *Catechism*, p. 252; Bridges. *Essays and Addresses*, p. 302; Comte. *Catechism*, p. 199.

CONGREVE AND ANTI-IMPERIALISM

It is evident that some Positivists already leant towards a humanitarian foreign policy before becoming acquainted with Comte's ideas. The judge, King's Counsel and friend of Carlyle, Vernon Lushington, for instance, a student of Comte from the early 1860s,[44] wrote a pamphlet on the Crimean War in 1855 which attacked 'the false political theory, I mean the Balance of Power … This for now 150 years has been constantly put forward as the principle of our Foreign Policy … the very idea of International Justice, and of National Duty, has become corrupted, and seems almost as if about to perish.' Instead, dismissing 'modern notions of a heartless cosmopolitanism [which] were introduced by the change which has made Gain our god', he further contended that 'the right of independence, or sovereignty, must be pushed farther than a right to the undisturbed enjoyment of territory. It must include the absolutely free power of making and executing all laws … Let every nation choose for itself … what its polity, laws, religion are to be.' Lushington was suspicious of heeding fair trade ideas too firmly. Commerce might promote peace, 'but, so far as it persuades men to be mere selfish gamblers', was also 'the source of war'. But in a Cobdenite vein, Lushington acknowledged that non-interference, or as he preferred to term it, 'State-Toleration', posed the problem of what to do when 'a tyrannical government, by the possession of mere military strength', suppressed 'the freedom and intelligence of a numerous people'. All states indeed required 'a strong government to repress crime and civil war. But if we help to establish such a government in a foreign nation, and then retire (conquest or permanent occupation being forbidden by our former reasoning), this strong government may degenerate into a tyranny, and breed worse evils, – ultimately, probably, worse anarchy.'[45]

The first notable, explicitly Positivist intervention in debates about foreign affairs came from the Irish scholar Henry Dix Hutton, who as he shed his theological beliefs via phrenology in the late 1840s, was provoked by the degree to which science continued to fuel the military capacities of nations. Hutton in 1855 applied to the Crimean War what he termed 'a faithful exposition of the Political Philosophy of M. Auguste Comte, so far as this embraces the theory of international relations'. This analysed the

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[44] *PR* (1912), 65. He was also active in the Aborigines Protection Society. His paean to Carlyle was in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (April–June 1856). See K. J. Fielding. 'Vernon Lushington: Carlyle's Friend and Editor', *Carlyle Newsletter*, 8 (1987), 7–18.

[45] Vernon Lushington. *How Shall the Strong Man Use his Strength?* (1855), pp. 11, 25, 47, 31, 48–9, 59.

transformation of society from a military to an industrial and pacific outlook. Hutton contended that the 'balance of power' ideal, originating in the Treaty of Westphalia, had become 'alternately a torpid fiction or a mischievous abstraction; furnishing ready pretexts to justify or excuse, the ambitious projects of the greater powers, but wholly inefficient to secure the independence of the lesser states'. It needed therefore to be replaced by a 'policy of *inter*national *statu quo*', which would inevitably spread to less-favoured populations, 'dissolving the unnatural and unwieldy states of our time, and replacing them by arrangements which recognise the just claims of race, language, and manners'. This would be accomplished by 'observing ourselves a complete abstinence from all forcible intervention in the internal affairs of other states; and in enforcing, when needed, a like abstinence, by repelling any attempts made in violation of this principle', as had occurred during the South American anti-colonial movements against Spain.[46] Again there are echoes of Cobden here.

It was an Oxford don, Richard Congreve, who would chiefly develop these themes in the next decade. Born at Leamington in Warwickshire, a student at Rugby and then Wadham College, Oxford, where he took a classics degree in 1840, Congreve was later a tutor at Rugby and ordained as a minister before returning to Wadham, before finally leaving both church and college. An Aristotle scholar, Congreve regarded the *Politics* as 'the foundation and master-work' of social science, praising in particular its attention to 'the organisation of a small community, complete in itself' as 'the great question of political science', and insisting that Comte's ideal state was 'analogous in size and requirements to the states of Greek experience'. He also supported the idea of a 'vigorous central executive' or 'dictatorship of progress' of a Carlylean or Cromwellian type, and analogous to Roman dictatorship. At Oxford, he powerfully affected three students who became leading Positivists: Frederic Harrison, a Fellow of Wadham from 1854 to 1856; Edward Spencer Beesly, who began his studies in 1849; and J. H. Bridges, to Congreve the 'acutest of the younger generation of my acquaintances', who gained a scholarship in 1851 and became a physician. Harrison later reiterated, however, that Congreve did not teach Comtism at Wadham, and that his pupils merely 'drew their early aspirations and yearnings for better things in Church and State' from him. And while they admired Congreve greatly, they recognised his limits. Harrison later recalled him as 'so completely without imagination, and of so hard and

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[46] Henry Dix Hutton to George Combe, 25 Dec. 1847, NLS MS 7285, f. 141; Hutton. *Modern Warfare* (1855), pp. 3, 15–16, 28–36.

matter-of-fact a mind that he could not create any great enthusiasm or hero worship in such men as Bridges, Beesly, or myself'. In a moment of exasperation he even lambasted him as 'a Buddhist bronze, a Fiji savage's wooden idol, & a crawling, intriguing, mendacious hypocrite'.[47]

After leaving Wadham, Congreve 'approximated more and more to the doctrine of Positivism', which he associated with international affairs from the outset. He called on John Bright during the Crimean War to explain his views. In 1855 he put himself forward as a candidate for the office of Indian Examiner, and solicited testimonials from Benjamin Jowett, Bonamy Price and Nassau Senior.[48] Then came the call. 'We ought specially to take up international questions,' Comte wrote to him in 1856, adding that here 'our principles will be more readily accepted than in internal affairs'. He urged Congreve to give 'a precise direction to our social intervention' by promoting 'the peaceable restoration of Gibraltar to Spain', terming this a 'great question of political morality, the social importance of which is far above any material effects it could have'.[49] Congreve replied 'that it would expose me to great opposition, in fact, to almost universal condemnation as a madman'. But he later confessed that Comte 'was right and that English opinion is much more open to change, than I had myself thought'. On its appearance in 1856, *Gibraltar*, tellingly subtitled 'or the Foreign Policy of England', so delighted Comte that he described Congreve's 'eminent pamphlet' as having had 'the special honour of having inaugurated positivist diplomacy'.[50]

Following *Gibraltar*, Congreve published another pamphlet, *India*, in November 1857, which met a predictably hostile response from the Anglo-Indian establishment.[51] (A counterattack from *The Times*, too, Congreve thought curtailed his teaching career.[52]) Here he again disallowed 'policy to set aside morality, and state-necessity to be a bar against bringing political questions before a higher tribunal'. He recommended that 'we withdraw from our occupation of India without any unnecessary delay, within the shortest period compatible with due arrangements for the security of

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[47] Richard Congreve. *The Roman Empire of the West* (1855), pp. 61, 175; Congreve, ed. *The Politics of Aristotle* (1855), pp. x, xxii, xxiv; *Historical Lectures* (1900), p. 10; Congreve Papers. Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Lett. c. 181, e. 49; Hirst. *In the Golden Days*, p. 129; Harrison Papers, 2/16, f. 38; Marvin Papers, MS Eng. Lett. e. 107.

[48] Add. MS 45,259, f. 17; 45,241, f. 46.

[49] Comte. *Lettres d'Auguste Comte ... à Henry Edger et à M. John Metcalf* (1889), p. 46; Comte. *Letters*, pp. 18, 162; Comte. *Lettres à Richard Congreve* (1889), p. 34.

[50] Add. MS 45,259, ff. 17–18; 43,842, f. 33.

[51] E.g., *Calcutta Review*, 55 (1872), xxvi–xxvii. The tract was reprinted in 1872 and 1919.

[52] Congreve. *Nineteenth Annual Circular* (1897), p. 3.

European life and property, and with such measures as shall be deemed advisable in the interest of Indian independence and good government'. Congreve suggested that a 'mixed commission' of seven powers might oversee such a separation, thus constituting 'the germ of a European protectorate', which would deal with 'the various Indian Governments on their own internal affairs'. Contending that 'all principles of international law are against our occupation', he asked if there was

in the East Indies a different international law from what exists in England? If openly it is avowed that there is such a difference, that what holds good of independent States in Europe is not binding in the East; then what are the limits of this difference, and on what rational basis does it rest? Is it on the evident assumption of superiority of race in the European, or is it on the plea of the comparative barbarism of the Hindoo population? . . . If, on the contrary, the principles that govern the intercourse of nations . . . are as valid in the East as in the West; if the only difference is one of mere form, rendered necessary by the different manners of the East, then . . . no English statesman can give an adequate justification for our forcible retention of our hold in India.

Citing Burke on the richness of Indian civilisation, Congreve then condemned the too rapid imposition of 'European ideas and European mechanical improvements'. He denied the efficacy and right of missionary activity even by mere persuasion on behalf of a religion which was 'extremely weak, – I had nearly said, dead'. Acknowledging his 'respect for that ancient polytheistic organization, compared with which our own social order is but a child in point of duration', he also insisted that it was 'unwise prematurely to hasten the decay of that long-established society (for it is in decay) [and] . . . to press on it the premature adoption of the progressive, yet still anarchical civilization of the West. Let us wait with patience.'[53]

In 1859, when the Mutiny had been bloodily suppressed, Congreve published a placard asserting 'the cause of the English in India to be unjust, that of the Hindoos just, as the legitimate effort of a nation to shake off an oppressive foreign yoke'. Believing, 'consequently, the English success to be the triumph of force over right', he condemned the 'ferocious spirit of vengeance' and 'atrocious cruelties' by which Britain had 'been demoralised ourselves and lowered in the eyes of all nations'. He attacked 'our whole policy' towards China in 1860. Another pamphlet followed in 1872, which contended that the question of Indian revenue 'vitiates all our intercourse with China', and controlled 'the action of our Government in regard to

[53] Congreve. *Essays Political, Social and Religious* (3 vols., 1874–1900), vol. I, pp. 71, 76, 81–2, 87, 91, 86.

Gibraltar'. It also reiterated that Britain's tenure was 'absolutely certain to end in ultimate failure, unless – and this is but too unlikely – we obviate failure by wise retirement'.[54]

In later years Congreve extended these criticisms to the rest of the empire. He condemned the Ashanti wars, and wrote extensively on Burma (where he believed immediate withdrawal was possible), Egypt and the Sudan, Uganda, the Transvaal and southern Africa.[55] In Europe, besides Gibraltar, he urged unnecessary possessions captured in war to be returned, like Heligoland to Denmark and Nice to Italy. His unifying ideal, as expressed in a tract written with Henry Crompton in 1879, was

> our deep conviction that 'Imperialism' is the great political question of the age; [and] that rejection and reversal of the Imperial policy, together with all ideas and schemes of empire, is the essential political condition of future progress. Not only is conquest in every form, whether by annexation or protectorate, to be deprecated, but the fundamental idea of Imperialism, namely, one centralised administration for vast and widely scattered countries, is mistaken in theory, in practice impossible to be realised, and productive of mischief and misery where it is attempted. The international organisation of Humanity must be founded on a different plan, antagonistic to aggression and war, and favourable to peaceful industry.[56]

Though this could be mistaken for Cobdenism, Positivists began to travel rapidly away from *Manchestertum* from the late 1850s onwards. Let us now consider why and how this breach occurred.

INTERNATIONAL POLICY (1866)

Far and away the most important pronouncement of Positivist diplomacy occurred with the publication in 1866 of a collection of essays orchestrated by Frederic Harrison and entitled *International Policy*.[57] Modelled in part

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[54] *PR* (1897), 73; Congreve. *The Propagation of the Religion of Humanity* (1860), p. 8; Congreve. *Essays*, vol. I, pp. 107, 431–2.

[55] Richard Congreve. *Fourteenth Annual Circular* (1891), p. 6; Congreve. *Essays*, vol. II, pp. 60–70. Of Burma in 1885, for example, he noted: 'This detestable Burmese affair is being successfully carried on and the robbery will be completed shortly I suppose by a formal act of annexation. So we go on in our evil course' (Add. MS 45,263, f. 39).

[56] Richard Congreve, E. S. Beesly and J. M. Bridges. *Papers on the War between France and Germany* (1870), pp. 10–11; Congreve. *Essays*, vol. II, p. 105.

[57] Simon unaccountably terms the volume 'not obviously Positivist in character' (*European Positivism*, p. 79), though it was advertised with the subtitle 'Essays by English Positivists'. Harrison wrote to Laffitte that it proceeded 'on the basis of Comte's political principles' (30 May 1866, MAC). Beesly is sometimes termed the editor, as is Congreve. A second edition (1884) omitted Cookson's essay on Japan. The volume was described in one review as 'really a Positivist publication' (*NR*, 23 Nov. 1882, 343).

on the volume of theological controversy called *Essays and Reviews*, the book would later be described by A. J. P. Taylor as 'the first composite volume in which a number of writers laid down an ideal foreign policy'. More precisely, *International Policy* demonstrates how coherent the Positivist critique of imperialism was well before the revival of British socialism, and what a distance had been travelled from the old radicalism. Indeed it presents the first mature critique of empire which included free trade imperialism under the rubric.[58] Harrison thought the book conflicted 'with every prejudice of the literary Briton – national, literary, political and religious … almost every sentence is the condemnation of all that the Times propounds and the advocacy of all that the Times hates and despises'. Its impact was considerable. It prescribed, Justin McCarthy later recalled, a 'simple, startling foreign policy … Its gospel … was merely "Be just and fear not. Renounce all aggression; give back the spoils of conquest" … This seemed to me, studying the school quite as an outside observer, its one great central idea.'[59] *International Policy* asserted that 'the interest, power, or prestige of any particular nation' was 'secondary and subordinate' to 'the acceptance of duties, not … the assertion of rights', which 'ought to have a moral, not a political or purely national foundation'. The predominant theme of the volume, Congreve's opening essay announced, was the Positivist

conception of the unity of the race. No theory as to its origin, no different estimate of the capabilities of its different parts, need or can disturb this practical relative conception. Under whatever divisions man exists, races, national aggregates, tribes, empires, states, families, all are but integral parts, practically, of one whole; branches of one great family; each with its proper function; each able to minister to the welfare of the others and of the whole. They are organs of one common organism, Humanity.[60]

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[58] Taylor. *The Trouble-Makers*, p. 67. We recall that Taylor describes Harrison's account of Britain's assault on Egypt in 1882 as the 'first, rather crude attempt to expose the financial basis of Imperialism' (*ibid.*, p. 90). As we have seen, it was anticipated fully by both Congreve and the essays in *International Policy*. But there is a clear difference between accusing meddling financiers of dictating government policy and identifying a systemic imperative within capitalism to secure ever wider foreign markets, though in both instances 'finance capital' as such may play a central role. The work is not even mentioned in Porter's *Critics*.

[59] Harrison Papers, 7/2, f. 21; McCarthy. *Reminiscences*, vol. II, pp. 208–10. It has been asserted that the volume 'was a vital precursor of the League of Nations' (Susan Liveing. *A Nineteenth Century Teacher. John Henry Bridges*, 1926, p. 125). Congreve thought the formation of the Anti-Aggression League in 1883 resulted from the book (*Essays*, vol. II, p. 452), and in 1884 stated that it had had 'a real influence on opinion' (*ibid.*, vol. II, p. 506).

[60] *International Policy* (1866), pp. vi, 5.

While supporting the independence of Canada and the Australasian colo-
nies, *International Policy* failed to endorse many prominent European
nationalists, such as Mazzini, whose schemes, it was contended, did nothing
'to secure the conservative element, international justice, and organic
harmony'. It did uphold a general principle of European guidance in the
world, meaning France and Britain chiefly. The newly reconstituted United
States might bring up the rear, but was denied any 'general leadership', and
Congreve warned that America 'weighs by her mass, not by her ideas'. The
volume offered little sympathy for Germany, and none for Russia. Congreve
also asserted that the 'African races assert no initiative. They wait for, and
are not averse to accept, a wise guidance,' while elsewhere the 'vast
Polytheistic Empires of the East … have also renounced, if they ever put
forward, any claim to the direction of others', as did 'the aggregate of the
Mohammedan powers'. Unified the human race might be, therefore, but
there were still to be leaders and followers. Economic liberalism was firmly
rejected: the new order would rest not on a 'collective selfishness' of
commercial interests, but 'on a community of faith'. The liberal ideal
'that the pursuit by each nation of its own interests will practically lead to
the harmonious adjustment of all human difficulties' would be supplanted
by 'the steady discouragement, even the prohibition of all attempts at
premature interference on the part of its own members or of others':

Respect for the organisations that exist is the first cardinal principle, the simplest
obligation, on those who cannot offer a substitute. Such should be the action of
Western statesmen and diplomatists in dealing with the Mohammedan and
Polytheistic East. Their only active interference should be to repress with vigour
the freebooting tendencies of European commerce … The simplest way would be
to withdraw all protection from the unfair trader. Let him be given up to the justice
of those on whom at present he preys. But it would be better still to exercise a
vigorous surveillance on the commercial world, and, above all, never to lend
support to their encroachments.[61]

Subsequent essays in the volume applied these principles. Harrison explored
Anglo-French relations, Beesly wrote on 'England and the Sea', and other
writers examined relations with India, China, Japan and the 'uncivilised
communities'. The conquest of Asia was regarded as the uniform result of
commercial policy, the 'India of yesterday' being 'the China of to-day, and
the China of to-day the Japan of to-morrow'. British domination was

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[61] Ibid., pp. 142, 46–7, 11, 32, 40, 42–3. Harrison, however, privately dissented from the volume's
formulation of the issue, writing to Beesly that Congreve 'seems to be misled by the dogma of the
European Western Republic', and that while European nations need to act together, 'As to action
beyond Europe without consulting America – the idea is ludicrous' (Harrison Papers, 1/4, f. 5).

described as 'ruinous to Indian society'.[62] Instead of dividing Indians, and proscribing their entry into imperial administration (as J. S. Mill for instance did[63]), it was suggested (by E. M. Pember) that Indians be integrated into the civil service and judiciary, as a step towards reversing the policy of annexation, and towards eventual independence. Chinese culture and traditions were given due homage by J. H. Bridges, later described as motivated by a 'real hatred of racial prejudices and the greed of empire', his sympathies being 'always with the oppressed' according to the 'humanitarian spirit' that 'all native races had the right to be left to themselves'.[64] Bridges claimed that even Beesly was too dismissive of Chinese civilisation (though both Lao-tzu and Confucius had been on Comte's list of great historical figures). The central issue he addressed was the imposition of the opium trade, and the need to restrain 'that unscrupulous lawlessness of our own merchants and seamen', which was 'the chief obstacle to peaceful commerce'. But Bridges also insisted that he 'wished to show that sympathy with other forms of religion than our own was an indispensable condition to regeneration of Oriental policy'. Other contributors argued along similar lines. The essay on Japan chiefly criticised the forced opening of commercial ports. Regarding native policy, the French were complimented for having 'fraternised and intermarried with the natives, instead of exterminating them'. A general policy of 'gradual elevation in the social scale, and their direct participation in the moral and intellectual results of Western civilisation' was endorsed respecting indigenous peoples, but without 'our prevailing disposition to an exaggerated individualism, overlooking the paramount importance of the family as the fundamental unit of society, without land seizures, and with adequate acknowledgement of the duty of the strong to protect the weak'.[65]

The theoretical importance of *International Policy* lay also in its distancing of the Positivists from Cobden and Bright, whose perspective, now clearly modified by both Comte's and Ruskin's critique of political economy,[66] was dismissed by Harrison:

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[62] *International Policy*, pp. 228, 279.

[63] In 1853, most notably. See Stokes. *The English Utilitarians and India*, p. 255.

[64] *International Policy*, pp. 282–95; M.B. *Recollections of John Henry Bridges* (1908), pp. 199–200, 251, 219.

[65] Liveing. *A Nineteenth Century Teacher*, p. 127; *International Policy*, pp. 339, 171, 543, 599.

[66] Harrison read *Unto This Last* in 1860, and was profoundly influenced by its rejection of classical political economy. See Gill Cockram. *Ruskin and Social Reform* (2007), p. 97. His own defence of Comte's political economy was 'The Limits of Political Economy', reprinted in *National and Social Problems* (1908), pp. 271–306.

Free trade, peace, commerce, industry, are with them the ends, not the means, of public prosperity. The happiness of nations does not consist any more than that of men in the free accumulation of capital ... Civilisation ... means the uniform education of the human powers, whether in communities or in man; and of these the social and generous instincts are the highest. It implies an intricate social union; control, government, and association; it cannot exist without mutual support, trust, and cooperation; the protection of the weak by the strong; the subordination of the unwise to the wise; the combination of all in common duties; the sacrifice of many personal desires; the willingness to bear the common burdens.

The pursuit of Cobdenite principles, instead, the Positivists predicted, would have dire economic consequences. Indeed, if, as Malthus had suggested, the heyday of the British labouring classes, in terms of material comforts, had been the years from 1720 to 1755, the imperial era was held to have begun in 1756, a coincidence 'we may be sure', Beesly stressed, that was 'not accidental'. The volume was reviewed prominently in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which dissented energetically from the premise that international affairs could be anything other than 'a gigantic game of skill and strength to be played according to certain rules, and in which success is rewarded with certain prizes', Gibraltar being one British example. In another lengthy account in the *Contemporary Review*, W. H. Fremantle commended the more obviously Christian messages purveyed by the book, while querying whether there was any 'prospect of good from any proposal to split up the existing unities into a number of small sovereign States'. But Fremantle also conceded that if Congreve and his co-religionists had been mocked for urging the return of Gibraltar to Spain, Congreve's similar advice respecting the Ionian islands in 1857 had in fact been followed within six years. David Urquhart acknowledged that the book aimed 'at nothing less than establishing a new law of nations', while complaining that it had been 'written as if no one had ever treated of the subject before'.[67]

INDIA, IRELAND, EGYPT

From the late 1860s onwards, for some fifteen years, Ireland and India became the two specific areas of greatest Positivist concern. Though contemporaries identified parallels in their conditions, each was important for quite different reasons. India, as we will see, provided an account of how imperialism actually functioned to extort wealth from indigenous peoples.

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[67] *International Policy*, pp. 112–13, 218; *PMG* (5 June 1866), 1823; *CR*, 3 (1866), 491, 493; *DR* (1 Aug. 1866), 107–8.

Ireland echoed this principle, but at a much more local, immediate and personal level. The two were clearly linked, however; indeed, as Henry Cotton put it, the 'Indian question and the Irish question are inseparable; the only real difference being that in Ireland the question is riper than it is in India; the whole situation is more fit for action. India can therefore afford to wait on Ireland.'[68]

India

The most important application of Positivist ideas to imperial problems after *International Policy* was to come not in Britain itself, but from India. Here Congreve soon developed an extensive correspondence with Comte's 'many, and some ardent, disciples among the educated Hindoos'.[69] Here, by 1870, two men, James Cruickshank Geddes (1842–80), a magistrate in the Bengal Civil Service and the first leader of the Calcutta Positivist Society, and his successor in that post, Henry John Stedman Cotton (1845–1915),[70] later to rise high in the ranks of the judiciary, persistently irritated the Anglo-Indian establishment by criticising British policy. They would also lay crucial parts of the foundation of what would later become known as the economic theory of imperialism.

It was Geddes, who married Congreve's sister in the first Positivist wedding in Britain, and whose premature death was accounted a 'terrible blow' and 'irreparable' loss to the movement, who first offered a powerful and sophisticated condemnation of British rule in India in the early 1870s.[71]

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[68] H. J. S. Cotton. *Religion of Humanity. The Annual Address* (Calcutta, 1887), pp. 13–14. See Howard Brasted. 'Indian Nationalist Development and the Influence of Irish Home Rule, 1870–1886', *MAS*, 1 (1980), 37–63, and Brasted. 'The Irish Connection: the Irish Outlook on Indian Nationalism 1870–1906', in Kenneth Ballhatchet and David Taylor, eds., *Changing South Asia: Politics and Government* (Hong Kong, 1984), pp. 67–78.

[69] James Routledge. *English Rule and Native Opinion in India* (1878), p. 161. See Sabyasachi Bhattacharya. 'Positivism in Nineteenth Century Bengal', in R. S. Sharma, ed., *Indian Society* (New Delhi, 1974), pp. 337–55, Geraldine Hancock Forbes. *Positivism in Bengal* (Calcutta, 1975), and Giuseppe Flora. *The Evolution of Positivism in Bengal* (Naples, 1993). The latter erroneously assumes that the Anglo-Indian Comtists were 'obviously more cautious, as they were all members of the ICS' (2), but does discuss Geddes. When the Positivist sacrament was first offered in India in 1884, the Brahmins present 'unanimously gave their opinion to the effect that the doctrine of the worship of Humanity and of the Government of the Dead over the Living, as well as the standard of morality preached in the Positivist faith, were at one with the precepts of the Hindoo Shastras, and their conviction was that Auguste Comte must have been a Hindoo Rishi in his previous life' (Add. MS 45,240, f. 7).

[70] On Cotton see *Sir Henry Cotton. A Sketch of His life and His Services to India* (Madras, n.d.). By 1900 the group had become the 'Society for the Study of Comte's Positive Religion', with some twenty members (Ingram Papers, D2808/29).

[71] Frederic Harrison. 'Nécrolgie: James C. Geddes', *Revue Occidentale*, 4 (1880), 462; H. J. S. Cotton. *Religion of Humanity. The Annual Address* (1888), p. 19.

A Scot who had studied in Aberdeen, where his brother was a professor, Geddes went to India in 1861. Deeply sympathetic towards the natives, he was intimately involved in relief efforts during the great Orissa famine of 1866, in which a quarter of the population, about 1.5 million people, died.[72] On leave in England in 1870, he became a Positivist. The commencement of the post-Mutiny critique of Indian finance is usually associated with Dadabhai Naoroji,[73] whose first article on the subject appeared in 1876, and who later became the first Indian Member of Parliament. But in two overlapping works begun in the *Calcutta Review* in 1870 and republished in 1871, Geddes contended that an intimate link existed between poverty in Britain, the export of capital to India, the falling rate of interest, government policy towards India and ensuing poverty in India itself. At this time, Geddes asserted, it was an '*action of Government*' which allowed British capitalists to 'evade their rival capitalists' competition, and their antagonists labourers' claims at home, by exporting much of the Social Savings for nationally guaranteed investments abroad' – an explanation which verged on underconsumptionism. These 'investments in India, investments in the Colonies', he emphasised, italicising the phrase '*which reserve a more or less distinct claim on the polity at home*', had brought about 'the heaviest drain on English resource'. For an Anglo-Indian official his conclusion was astonishingly radical. Some day, he warned,

the burden of Indian Famine and the burden of English Pauperism will be too great to be borne. At last, when even the patient Hindus will decline to be any longer mulcted in the ever mounting Interest Charge, when the truck ground Proletariate of England will refuse to slaughter the rebel peasantry of India for the sake of Anglo-Indian rentiers ... The daily estrangement of our working classes means that Rebellion abroad will be the opportunity for Revolution at home.[74]

Geddes's second 1871 tract offered the most acute early Positivist analysis of Indian political economy. Providing a sweeping thirty-four-point indictment of the financial consequences of British rule, Geddes commenced

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[72] William Digby later termed him the 'hero' of the famine ('*Prosperous' British India*, 1901, p. 198). See further J. C. Geddes. *Administrative Experience Recorded in Former Famines* (Calcutta, 1874).

[73] E.g., Barber. *British Economic Thought and India*, p. 227. See B. N. Ganguli. *Dadabhai Naoroji and the Drain Theory* (1965).

[74] James Geddes. *The Month Gutemberg; or, Modern Industry* (1871), pp. 48–9. Later Positivists would similarly argue that exporting food 'to pay what is virtually her tribute to England, has seriously interfered with the old practice [of storing food reserves] and introduced production for sale, a system suitable for European countries, but too artificial and advanced for India ... In India ... *famine* is the result not of drought ... but of poverty unable to make provision against drought ... if ... British government is in any degree draining India of her wealth, it follows that in the same degree is British government the cause of Indian famine' (*PR*, 1897, 88).

with the proposition that 'India costs more in government than it yields in revenue.' He insisted that the supposed increase of trade in fact merely represented 'coerced sales and compelled purchases … merely the Custom-house registrations of foreign taxation extended in area or augmented in rate'. The overdevelopment of agriculture by contrast with manufactures, moreover, meant that 'the yield of crops has been diminishing in India as formerly in Ireland. The soil becomes exhausted by all this over-cropping and excessive exportation. Hence in India, as formerly in Ireland, a more and more frequent recurrence of Dearth and Famine, and, latterly, the appearance of Pauperism almost chronic, needing national relief out of taxes spent on Public Works.' Thereafter the assertion that Indian famine resulted from Britain 'draining' her wealth away remained a touchstone among Positivists, as Beesly for instance reiterated in 1897, as well as many later radicals and socialists.[75]

If Indian exports hardly betokened prosperity, moreover, Geddes thought the same was true for imports, whose increase revealed

not growing prosperity, – but growing hardship; the existing Indian Railways, however they may be applauded in England as fostering our iron and cotton manufactures, are, to India, luxuries beyond her means. As for the Irrigation projects … their financial results are even more discouraging than those of the Railways; English Dominion in India … is, in other respects, as presently constituted, bad for India and bad for England.

Geddes also stressed that the working classes gained nothing from the empire, for hitherto 'the chief function of India, from the English Workmen's point of view, has been to subsist certain of the Middle Classes of England, and to keep up the current rates of interest for the English Capitalist. The English Workmen share little of these salaries, and less of these profits.' Citing Beesly's and Bridges's essays in *International Policy*, Geddes offered a startling statement of the central premise of much of that part of the later economic theory of imperialism which focused upon finance capital:

A large amount of English Savings meant for the defenceless, has been and is being invested in Anglo-Indian securities by private individuals, by Managers of Public Institutions, by Directors of Insurance Companies, all acting as Trustees under what is generally believed to be a covert, if not an overt, guarantee of the English nation. Too much of this sacred Trust-Fund, meant to form the portion of the

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[75] *PR* (1897), 88. The theme was later identified with Romesh Dutt in particular. A counter-view is Charles McMinn. *Famine Truths-Half Truths, Untruths* (Calcutta, 1902).

Fatherless, the Husbandless, and the Shieldless of our people, is being staked upon that Dominion.

Geddes then followed these assertions with a close statistical analysis demonstrating the linkage between Indian indebtedness and British rule. A debt of £200 million required £10 million in interest annually. Crucially, he insisted that 'the mass of these liabilities involves interest at 5 per cent. but the Railway portion clears 3 of this 5 per cent. *for us so long as we hold the country*'. The fact that he italicised this passage, too, indicates that he saw an intimate connection between falling domestic rates of profit, debt collection, military occupation, and then even further conquest, since this perpetuated and enriched the loan system. Eleven years before the threat of default on Egyptian debts led Gladstone to occupy Egypt, therefore, we see the roots of the conspiratorial 'bondholder' as well as the systematic 'surplus capital' explanations of imperial expansion. Another issue which agitated Geddes, following Congreve, was the opium trade (very profitable for the French in Indochina too). His advice was to cease opium cultivation and substitute the growing of 'wholesome grain crops' in its place.[76] He was also highly critical of the role Christianity played in gaining a legal foothold prior to commercial conquest, through the 'most potent' doctrine of extra-territoriality. Thus he argued that it was 'necessary to abolish whatsoever consular jurisdictions out of Christendom are in conflict with the Pagan magistracies. It is necessary to recognise that a Heathen, not less than a Christian Government, is and ought to be independent within its own territories.' Such complaints, however, fell largely on deaf ears. Hyndman said of Geddes that 'no nobler character ever honoured the Indian services'. But though he was subsequently invited to appear before the East India Finance Committee, his remonstrances were ignored, as was his advice that if 'the present is not the time to be settling the particular details of the general policy of withdrawal', it was 'enough for the present that the general principle be secured'.[77]

The second of Comte's leading Anglo-Indian followers, Sir Henry John Stedman Cotton, as he would become, was from perhaps the oldest Anglo-Indian family then existing, with a record of continuous service over five

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[76] Congreve. *Essays*, vol. II, pp. 115–19; Add. MS 45,262, f. 51. B. Fossett Lock contended that Britain's support of the opium trade, the revenue of which in the early 1880s was worth some £7–8 million annually, was disastrous to China and Burma, and demonstrated that Britain's first commercial treaty with China 'was extorted by force of arms' (*The Opium Trade and Sir Rutherford Alcock*, 1882, pp. 8–9, 15).

[77] Geddes. *The Month Gutemberg*, p. 32; H. M. Hyndman. *The Bankruptcy of India* (1886), p. 134; *Calcutta Review*, 56 (1873), 400.

generations. Educated at Magdalen College, Oxford, then trained as a civil engineer, Cotton's suspicions about the merits of British rule were awakened by John Malcolm Ludlow's 1858 lectures on India, which illustrated the oppressive nature of the revenue system, the opium trade, the salt monopoly and other grievances.[78] Drawn to Positivism by Mill's 1864 essay on Comte in the *Westminster Review*, Cotton attended Congreve's lectures in the Strand in the company of George Eliot, Harrison, Beesly and others. Arriving in Bengal in October 1867, he became the model Positivist reformer abroad, later claiming that his life's work had 'been devoted to bridging the gulf which separates the English from the Indian races'. 'We were in the extraordinary position', he wrote to Henry Crompton in 1878, 'of being the first Positivists to whom the great problem of the relationship of the West with the East was presented for practical study and solution.' In the mid-1880s annual meetings of the Church of Humanity were being held at his residence, and sympathetic Indian onlookers like N. N. Ghose deduced that 'Mr Cotton's political views were the necessary result of his religion.'[79]

On home leave in 1883, Cotton summarised his experience of 'the evils which the possession of India entails on England'. India was

the permanent element of disturbance in all our relations with the great nations of the extreme East. It is a question of Indian revenue that vitiates our intercourse with China. At the same time the current of our foreign policy in Europe is hardly less injuriously affected by Indian considerations.[80]

Then, of course, there were the evils which England entailed on India. Cotton asserted in 1886 that Britain's policy had been one of deliberate underdevelopment:

while the agricultural trade of India has expanded her manufactures have diminished ... the vast indigenous manufactures of the country have been crushed out by British competition ... handicrafts by which ten million or fifteen million people gained their living had been destroyed by the substitution of foreign for home manufactures.

Lamenting that the 'present state of things is absolutely incompatible with the real material welfare of India', Cotton insisted that 'it can never be overcome except by the systematic encouragement of indigenous arts and industries and by the introduction of mechanical appliances. These, again, can never be fully utilized until the children of the soil have been prepared

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[78] John Malcolm Ludlow. *British India* (2 vols., 1858), vol. II, pp. 283–311.
[79] Add. MS 45,242, f. 183; 45,240, f. 132. [80] H. J. S. Cotton. *England and India* (1883), pp. 21–2, 25.

for their use by technical education.' It was, after a fashion, a call for economic independence, if not autarky. Yet Cotton also urged caution, writing in 1878 that Britain's 'true policy for some time to come should be one of conservation, to restrict ourselves to maintaining the *status quo*, and to encourage as much as we can a system of protection'.[81]

By the mid-1880s, following the reforming spirit of Lord Ripon's administration (1880–4), Cotton felt that a course was 'gradually made straight for the emancipation of the Indian people'. The introduction of the immensely controversial Ilbert bill, which would have given native magistrates jurisdiction over Europeans, in particular, was so vehemently opposed by Anglo-Indians that it 'succeeded far more in advancing the cause of Indian unity than any action or legislation on the lines contemplated by that Viceroy could have accomplished'. The following year the Indian Congress movement was founded, and Cotton published his *New India* (1885). This praised both Blunt's and Hyndman's views on India, and lamented the growing hatred between the races, but prophesied that while 'English rule in its present form cannot continue ... the connection between India and England will not be snapped'. Instead what would emerge was what John Bright envisioned, 'a federated portion of the dominion of the great British Empire', a 'United States of India', or 'a federation of independent states cemented together by the authority of England'. Cotton would acknowledge, too, that British rule had played some role in this process, through promoting education, a common language, transport and communications.[82]

Yet such reforms were to be achieved not through modernisation as such, but also by what was anathema to many critics of Indian society, 'the conservation of the caste system'.[83] Cotton emphasised that what Positivism offered Hindus was not a rejection of their religion, but a supplement to it: 'The religion of Humanity, while it binds you to a community of effort with other nations, accepts all the previous faiths of your people. It is a Positivised Hinduism that you adopt: the religion of

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[81] Cotton. *Technical Education Or The Indian Revolution*, pp. 4–7, 10; *New India*, p. 98; 'Prospects of Moral Progress in India', *FR*, 24 (1878), 398.

[82] H. J. S. Cotton. *Indian and Home Memories* (1911), pp. 177, 181; *New India*, pp. 165, 11–12, 202; *Sir Henry Cotton*, pp. 26–7.

[83] Cotton. *England and India*, p. 37. Other Positivists like Samuel Lobb (1833–76), a Bengal college principal, were keen to stress that they did not seek to 'obliterate those broad demarcations which separate nation from nation and race from race', and noted Comte's 'appreciation of the caste system' ([Lobb] *A Positivist. A Reply to the National Paper on Positivism*, Calcutta, 1868, pp. 1, 20). Lobb was subsequently attacked anonymously for 'perverting the minds of the young' (Routledge. *English Rule and Native Opinion in India*, p. 171).

Humanity on the one hand with the system and life of Hinduism on the other.' Though he lamented that 'generations may pass away, before we can expect the consummation of the policy I advocate', he stressed that the 'key-note of internal reform is the gradual substitution of native for European official agency'. Consequently, the 'benevolent despotism of an autocratic administration is merging into a system of free representation and municipal and local independence. The era of territorial aggrandizement has exhausted itself; the cry of annexation is no longer heard.' Writing anonymously in 1867, Cotton warned Indians to avoid seeing 'the present state of society in Europe as the ideal of perfection, whereas that state is altogether transitory and is symptomatic rather of disease than of health'. Abolishing caste would 'be attended with the most dangerous consequences unless some powerful religious influences were brought to bear upon the people at large, so that the old bonds might be replaced by others of equal strength if of a less objectionable nature'. Instead, the 'basis of internal order in this country is to be found in a patrician aristocracy of indigenous growth and trained by past associations to control and lead'.[84] But such influences could not be Christian, and Cotton condemned missionary activity as 'a direct infringement of the policy of neutrality'. The answer thus was to 'modify, but do not destroy it; let its distinctive conceptions be preserved, but let them gradually be placed upon a social instead of a supernatural basis'.[85] Here, too, a parallel with the Roman empire could be addressed, as Bridges pointed out. For while the 'Roman Empire was in the truest sense an incorporation of discordant nations and languages into a harmonious system, from which the free civilization of Western Europe takes its origin', to 'compare it to the British Government of Hindustan is misleading. If several of the Governors-General of India had been drawn from the native population, the parallel would be less absurdly inaccurate.' At the same time Cotton acknowledged that 'the separatist tendencies of Hindus and Mahomedans must be reckoned with, and their natural inclination to live apart in distinct geographical areas may with advantage be encouraged. Europeans and Eurasians may likewise be encouraged to form settlements of their own in suitable localities.' *New India* 'made a great stir at the time of its publication', and was highly praised by Bright, though it met with predictably stiff opposition from the Anglo-Indian establishment.[86]

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[84] Cotton. *Religion of Humanity* (1887), p. 11; *England and India*, pp. 16–17, 13–14; *Indian Speeches and Addresses* (Calcutta, 1903), p. 136.

[85] *Positivist Articles, Reviews, and Letters. Reprinted from the Bengalee* (Calcutta, 1870), pp. 9, 57, 11.

[86] Bridges. *Illustrations of Positivism*, p. 397; *Sir Henry Cotton*, p. 28. See the biographical sketch in Cotton. *Indian Speeches and Addresses*, pp. i–xx; here, pp. vii, 134.

Cotton ended his career as Chief Commissioner in Assam, retiring with a knighthood in 1902; it was later claimed that he was denied the Lieutenant-Governorship of Bengal because he 'dared to expose the tyrannous and short-sighted policy of the Assam tea-planters' by taking the coolies' side in a wage dispute.[87] Returning to Britain, he joined the British committee of the Indian National Congress, criticised the government for failing to revoke the Bengal partition of 1905, and warned of 'the dangers to Europe, her vast and threatening naval and military armaments' provoked by 'Imperial concentration'. He also opposed the British expedition to Tibet to force open another door to trade, to Francis Younghusband's consternation. Becoming an MP in 1906 on the 'Extreme Left' of the Liberal Party, he led the 'India group' in the Commons, supported the *Swadeshi* (self-subsistence) movement and resisted the deportation of Indian activists in 1907–8. As late as 1911 he praised the progress of Indian nationalism, and lamented British efforts to promote Muslim separatism in India.[88]

Such proposals implied that most Indian and Anglo-Indian Positivists did not expect British rule to terminate abruptly. Respecting India, Cotton wrote to Congreve in 1870, 'I quite feel that we could not, ought not rather to withdraw at once. The great point is to shape our policy and accommodate our minds to the prospect of leaving.' In 1879 he reflected: 'Suppose England willing – nay anxious to retire from India how could she best perform the operation as regards India? An abrupt retreat would I imagine not be advocated by any.' He also wondered whether 'the transition from subjection to independence' might 'be facilitated by inviting the collective intervention and assistance of the West? Would not such a method provide for an equitable adjustment of any differences that might arise between England and the Native States, and at the same time guarantee India against the disturbance of foreign invasion, which has so often interfered with the spontaneous development of her civilisation?' That year he advised an Indian correspondent, Jogendra Chandra Ghosh, that the 'East must wait for the West ... the Positivist body ... must be directly western in its actions and can only directly call on the East to join it when it has gained the powers which some day or other it will gain of guiding the West. Meantime it cannot seek merely to disorder without adequate compensation such organizations as exist in the East.' In 1880 Congreve suggested another

[87] *Sir Henry Cotton*, p. 14; Cotton. *Indian & Home Memories*, pp. 260–77.
[88] *PR* (1904), 242; Cotton Papers, MS Eur. D. 1202/1: 48 (28 Feb. 1906); *Nationalities and Subject Races: Report of a Conference Held in Caxton Hall, Westminster* (1911), pp. 46–7.

suitable interim measure, 'the revocation of that foolish title of Empress', which he later described as having commenced that 'decadence in the national life' which marked imperialism.[89] He reiterated to an Indian correspondent that the 'more you and your countrymen can make it clear to the English that our rule is fundamentally unacceptable to you the better. This may be done without violence. It has in a measure been done, for I notice that our press more and more recognizes the fact that we are unpopular throughout India.' And in 1881 he noted that the 'most immediately urgent question is how to resist the revolutionary impact of Western ideas prematurely urged upon you not to have your system broken down before its time'.[90] Other Positivists later added further proposals respecting the timing of imperial departure. By 1908 Harrison was much more precise respecting India: the way forward lay in appointing natives to one-third of the principal judicial and executive offices immediately, with the promise of one-half within a generation. In 1913 he thought half of Britain's ground forces there might also be withdrawn. 'Immediate abandonment', he suggested to Cotton two years later, 'I think with you is impossible, though it may come by a crash, but a statesmanlike prevision might be exerted so as to make abandonment possible in a given period. Bengal, the first seized, might be the last abandoned, and used by us in the mean time as a basis of operations for our reconstitution of divers independent states.' And Cotton agreed that to 'evacuate India immediately and without due precautions would ... be to act like a man who should kidnap a child and then in a fit of repentance abandon him in a tiger jungle'.[91] Such gradualism seems to have been generally favoured by Indian Positivists, as well.

Ireland

Most of the leading British Positivists wrote on Ireland at one time or another, with the Irish contingent, Congreve noted in 1877, generally 'acting in concert'.[92] Congreve's 1868 essay on the subject coincided with the founding of the Ireland Society, whose goals were abolishing the

[89] Congreve Papers. Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Lett. c. 184; Add. MS 45,262, ff. 7, 36, 45; *War against War in South Africa* (5 Jan. 1900), 179.

[90] Add. MS 45,262, ff. 29–30, 36, 42–3, 80.

[91] *PR* (1908), 59; (1913), 30; Congreve Papers. Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Lett. c. 184; Cotton. *England and India*, p. 24.

[92] Congreve Papers. Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Lett. c. 182. Beesly suggested in 1879 that the 'Irish group' in fact had formal meetings from time to time (Ingram Papers, D2808/7/1). Comte, Albert Crompton complained, had supposed that Positivist leadership could only emerge from a 'Catholic milieu' (D2808/K6/7).

Protestant establishment and settling 'the land question in harmony with the feelings of the Irish people, the object being to replace the nation in possession of its land, by converting into proprietors the actual cultivators, whether large or small'. Congreve here explained that treatment of Ireland had been 'purposely excluded' from *International Policy* because it was part of the United Kingdom. Now, however, he acknowledged 'the national longings of the Irish nation' for 'a full and complete state', and recommended repealing the Act of Union, with an interim Viceroy appointed by the Crown for five years, but not complete severance.[93] This was followed by a tract by James Cotter Morison (1831–88) detailing Irish complaints respecting the Church establishment, land tenure and 'wounded nationality'. J. H. Bridges, who was 'from the beginning, a convinced Home Ruler', and who probably helped edge John Morley in this direction, addressed a series of letters to a Bradford newspaper on the same subject at this time.[94] Having produced a pamphlet in 1867 entitled *Prussia and Ireland* outlining how tenants might acquire estates more easily, Henry Dix Hutton in 1868 proposed a further plan for extending peasant-proprietorship, and then reviewed Irish grievances in greater detail a year later. The Newton Hall librarian, B. Fossett Lock, offered an extended commentary on the failures of the 1870 Land Act in 1881. That year Congreve wrote that 'Ireland and India are for England two very cognate subjects . . . we are in very troubled waters with reference to both. We cannot but work on in the direction of the independence of both.' A decade later Shapland Hugh Swinny delivered a course of lectures on Irish history which described the country as 'the typical national organism'.[95]

But some disagreements clearly existed amongst the 'Irish group'. In 1881 Congreve pleaded for a 'deliberate and well-matured concession of full independence to Ireland'. In 1883 he reiterated that 'none of the remedies proposed, singly or collectively, can meet the difficulty, that the full independence of Ireland can alone be satisfactory'. 'Immediate separation', he reflected in 1886, was 'undesirable but I strongly hold that in any policy

[93] Harrison. *New Year's Address, 1887*, p. 23; Congreve. *Essays*, vol. I, pp. 181, 185–6, 191. On the wider constitutional context see John Kendle. *Ireland and the Federal Solution . . . 1870–1921* (Montreal, 1989). Congreve's views on Ireland were fairly widely reported, e.g., in the *NR* (12 Apr. 1868), 234.

[94] James Cotter Morison. *Irish Grievances Shortly Stated* (1868); Frances H. Torlesse. *Some Account of J. H. Bridges and his Family* (1912), p. 82; J. H. Bridges. *The Home Rule Question Eighteen Years Ago* (1886).

[95] Henry Dix Hutton *et al. Proposals for the Gradual Creation of a Farmer-Proprietary in Ireland* (Dublin, 1868); Hutton. *History, Principle, and Fact; in Relation to the Irish Question* (1870); B. Fossett Lock. *The Three F's, or, The Irish Land Question, Past, Present, and Future* (1881); Add. MS 45,262, f. 75; S. H. Swinny. *The History of Ireland* (1890), p. 3.

adopted towards the land it ought to be an essential ingredient, the prospect of her own complete self-existence as a nation with as complete a control over her actions as any other European state has attained'.[96] Hutton, however, lamented in 1882 that some Positivists had called for Ireland's 'immediate and complete separation from Great Britain'. He warned that while the natural course of disintegration commencing with the American Revolution heralded the formation of a 'much larger number of independent states, homogeneous and animated by a genuine patriotism', such 'patriotic feeling and aims can flourish only when historic traditions and present interests harmonize sufficiently'. Since Positivism was 'not revolutionary', separation implied that 'Ireland would find herself compelled to adopt republican institutions for which she is quite unprepared; and would to a certainty be drawn into that prevailing militarism which devours the substance and demoralises the spirit of continental nations'. Harrison, who wrote frequently on the Irish question, by 1886 proposed appointing a Viceroy removable only by the Queen, and expropriating landlords without compensation. He described himself as 'in principle an Irish Nationalist' who had never 'wavered in my hearty support of the Home Rule cause'. What he meant by this, however, was not 'the erection of Ireland into a foreign state … but for a Government of the Irish people in Ireland, and from Ireland – a Government in the interests of the Irish people, not from the British point of view, or the point of view of Saxonised landlords'. As late as 1918 he still insisted that the idea of Irish independence was 'absurd'.[97] In 1887 the London Committee, too, reiterating its protest against Irish coercion, stated that:

The majority of the Society have from the first supported the Home Rule movement. They have considered that on general principles the course of modern progress lies in the direction, not of concentrating imperial power, but of allowing freer play to provincial life … Far from wishing to see the connection between Britain and Ireland severed, they have thought that a wise measure of provincial independence will have the effect of rendering that connection more peaceful and effective than it has hitherto been.[98]

When in 1890 Swinny gave three lectures on Ireland at Newton Hall announcing the imminent 'triumph of Ireland', he proclaimed that what 'particular form that triumph will take matters little, so long as the

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[96] LPS Papers, 1/1, f. 43a; Congreve. *Religion of Humanity. Annual Address* (1883), p. 15; Add. MS 45,263, f. 62.
[97] Hutton. *A Letter on the Irish Crisis* (1882), pp. 7, 13, 15–16; Harrison. *Memoirs*, vol. I, p. 309; Harrison. *National & Social Problems*, p. 251; Harrison. *Obiter Scripta* (1919), p. 92.
[98] LPC. *Report for the Year 1887* (1888), p. 15.

Government for the future be administered by Irishmen in accordance with the wishes and feelings of the Irish, and in close co-operation with the great mass of the people'.[99] The firebrand Malcolm Quin complained that Hutton, Ingram and the Galway mathematician George Johnston Allman (1824–1904) were all more timid than Comte and even opposed Home Rule, while Harrison lamented in 1898 of Ingram that he seemed 'more Imperialist in Ireland than any of us here'.[100] Beesly, however, seems like Congreve to have preferred independence from the outset. At an 1886 meeting of the Society he instigated a discussion of Ireland, and was described as taking 'a distinctively opposite line in favour of universalistic Home Rule or rather separation' compared with Fossett Lock, Hutton and Ingram, though Lock thought several artisans present sided with Beesly. The latter, however, suggested in 1881 that the army in Ireland should be increased 'so that the people may not be tempted to any rash outbreak, which could have no other than a disastrous result'. But in 1886 he none the less contended that 'I do not desire the complete separation of Ireland from England, but I do not fear it ... sooner than go on as we have been doing for the last hundred years, and especially the last ten years, I should welcome complete separation.'[101] He reflected privately, too, in 1899 that

Though I threw myself entirely into the Home Rule movement I was never a strong believer in it. I argued in 1856, and I still hold, that the Union is a source of weakness and loss to England, and that the best way out of it is to cast off Ireland entirely, and to give her complete independence, and then, if she desired it, as I think she would, to negotiate new terms of alliance, as between two independent states.[102]

Despite these disagreements the Positivists emerged as the vanguard of the Irish Home Rule movement. It has been recently suggested, indeed, that they were 'the first prominent group of Britons openly to advocate self-government for Ireland'. In 1887 Harrison proudly proclaimed that

Twenty years ago, Positivists, alone amongst English parties and schools, put forward the claim for Irish nationality. We formed an Ireland Society; we petitioned Parliament on behalf of convicted Nationalists; we asked, in the words of Dr Congreve, that Ireland should be created 'a new self-ruling unit' ... what we

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[99] Swinny. *The History of Ireland*, p. 45.
[100] Ingram Papers, D2808/D/1. On Quin see T. R. Wright. 'Positively Catholic: Malcolm Quin's Church of Humanity in Newcastle upon Tyne', *DUJ*, 75 (1983), 11–20. Ingram admitted to Quin in 1895 that 'I do not think I could speak as strongly as you or he [Congreve] in condemnation of either the foreign policy of the country or of the conduct of the capitalists' (Ingram Papers, D2808/1/8).
[101] Edward Beesly. 'Our Foreign and Irish Policy', *FR*, 39 (Feb. 1881), 242; Beesly. *Home Rule* (1886), p. 2.
[102] Harrison Papers, 6/5, f. 2; Ingram Papers, D2808/D/1; D2808/59/25; D2808/7/8.

uttered . . . has now become the platform of the main Liberty Party, the hope to which the enlightened part of our whole people look.

How far these views influenced the wider labour movement has been questioned.[103] If Gladstone's embracing of Home Rule was a key step in the creation of the New Liberalism,[104] however, this clearly gives Positivism a larger role in forming the latter than is usually conceded. Moreover, the Irish implications of Comte's anti-imperialism may well have been a major factor in attracting many of his leading British followers. Amongst these were John Kells Ingram (1823–1907), author of a famous 'seditious' poem, 'Who Fears to Speak of '98?', who met Comte in 1855, was in contact with Beesly by 1870, was later a Professor of English Literature and then Greek, then an influential political economist who helped promote Gaelic literature, and Vice-Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, and then, during the Boer War, the author of a poem praising the Transvaal President Kruger;[105] Dublin-born Shapland Hugh Swinny (1857–1923), a self-confessed believer in 'fervent Nationalism', whose 'Irish parentage concurred with his historical insight in viewing the untrammelled development of the Irish nation as essential to human well-being';[106] Henry Dix Hutton (1824–1907), long employed in the library of Trinity College, Dublin; Dublin-born Dr Thomas Carson (1839–90); and Malcolm Quin (1854–1945), whose father was Irish-born. All regarded themselves as 'Irish' or had some intimate connection with the country. The mothers of both Beesly and Harrison were Irish, and the latter referred to the former's 'native Ireland'. Both stood as Home Rule candidates in the 1886 General Election. This is clearly more than mere coincidence. Irish Home Rule and Comtism were in fact to become nearly synonymous for Positivists themselves, and they clearly often doted obsessively on the issue. Indeed Ingram confessed privately that 'Positivists often come to grief, I think, when they insist on introducing

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[103] G. K. Peatling. *British Opinion and Irish Self-government, 1865–1925* (Dublin, 2001), p. 31; Harrison. *New Year's Address, 1887*, p. 9. Peatling concludes that the Positivists did not play 'a material part in the growth of the acceptance of Irish self-government in Britain' (p. 15), a view disputed here. His is, however, the first study to examine extensively the Positivists' views on Ireland, though these are by and large severed from their wider anti-imperialist aims. On the context see most recently Eugenio F. Biagini. *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism 1876–1906* (Cambridge, 2007).

[104] As is stated, for instance, in L. Atherley-Jones. 'The New Liberalism', *NC*, 26 (1889), 186–93.

[105] Ingram Papers, D2808/1/21; D2808/2; John Kells Ingram. *Sonnets and Other Poems* (1900), p. 80. On Ingram see Hugh Swinny, 'The Death of Dr Ingram', *PR* (1907), 128–31, and [C. L. Falkiner]. *Memoir of John Kells Ingram* (Dublin, 1907), which studiously ignores his Positivism. Some historians have viewed it as having hindered his reputation as an economist (Gerard M. Koot. *English Historical Economics 1870–1926*, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 32, 59). See also G. K. Peatling. 'Who Dares to Speak of Politics? John Kells Ingram and Hypothetical Nationalism', *IHS*, 31 (1998–9), 202–21.

[106] Ingram Papers, D2808/54/25; *PR* (1923), 182.

the Irish question where it has no direct relevancy.' An 'Irish' outlook predisposed some Positivists to take a greater interest in Indian affairs, and probably drove them to greater militancy elsewhere ('the Irish', it was said, for instance, 'really detested the South African war'). In turn, Positivist foreign policy would come increasingly to be termed simply what F. J. Gould, later claiming to have invented the term in 1886 to describe 'the inevitable finality of the world-politics', called 'Home Rule All Round', and what Beesly in 1889 labelled 'the general adoption of home rule'.[107] Ireland, in a sense, was thus for many the template of Positivist nationalism.

Egypt

As we have seen, Britain's invasion of Egypt in 1882 has often been regarded as a critical turning point both analytically, in underscoring and popularising the idea of a financial cause of imperial expansion; and politically, in terms of the loss of the Liberal Party to pro-imperialist sentiment, as well as growth of Positivist support for a variety of native independence movements.

The background to British intervention is well known. In Egypt a nationalist movement led by Arabi Pasha emerged in response to Anglo-French exploitation of a weak and profligate Khedive, threatening the repayment of vast and immensely profitable loans to international financiers. Gladstone, a third of whose own personal investments were in Egypt, flung aside the anti-expansionist rhetoric of his 1880 election campaign, bombarded Alexandria, invaded Egypt and arrested Arabi. The Positivists, along with many other liberals, protested against this unabashed rescue of financial interests, and published leaflets by the thousand, as well as a joint protest with their Parisian counterparts. 'As usual, financiers and money-dealers pulled the strings unseen,' thought Harrison, in order to 'secure bondholders in their usurious interest', which in this case entailed paying half of Egypt's revenue to foreigners. For the next twenty years, Harrison later reflected, 'no member of the Liberal party, whether politician or publicist, could be counted on to resist unjust war and Imperial expansion'. Yet why here and now, asked Comte's followers, when 'Spain has for many years been in default, and her debt is largely held by Englishmen. No one has ever dreamed of proposing that our Government should compel Spain

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[107] Harrison Papers, 1/3, f. 15; Add. MS 45,228, f. 267; *EW* (15 Jan. 1910), 7; Ingram Papers, D2808/D/3; Bridges. *Illustrations of Positivism*, p. 296. The term was also used in 1886 in Andrew Reid's *The New Liberal Programme*, p. 146, albeit as 'Home rule all round'.

to satisfy the demands of English bondholders … we declare that fidelity to party becomes criminal when it leads to the support or toleration of such a policy as our Government is pursuing towards Egypt.'[108]

At the time of Arabi's trial, the Society launched an appeal for funds, forwarding to Wilfrid Blunt whatever was raised.[109] An Anti-Aggression League was founded at the Westminster Palace Hotel on 22 February 1882, supporters of which included Herbert Spencer, John Morley and Lord Hobhouse, and which one speaker traced to *International Policy*. In an address on the crisis, Harrison blamed not Gladstone himself but the 'zealous governors and fiery consuls, pushed on by the resident traders seeking new markets, the viceroys and envoys, and ambassadors, trained to dictate to kings, and to extend the Empire by policy or force, the adventurous spirits who form an irregular band of pioneers in advance of the limits of the Empire, the permanent and colonial staff'. His attack on British policy was practically unparalleled in its condemnation:

England, in spite of all our profession, is that country which, of all others, has the oftenest war on its hands, and is the oftenest engaged in crushing the efforts of some weaker people for independence. The German Empire, under Bismarck, is a model of a peaceable nation compared to England; Russia herself has not so many wars, and all the military monarchies in the world put together are not so frequently engaged in fighting as our little island.[110]

To this assault was added another by B. Fossett Lock, which classified the Liberal Party's attitudes towards foreign affairs into four categories: Whigs, Nonconformists, Darwinians, and Humanitarians or Positivists, with the last-named being the heroes, and the Darwinians the chief villains, of the piece. Positivists, insisted Lock, believed that 'the only legitimate use of force to be the prevention of aggression by any one upon the sphere of the others: it is only so that each can grow or evolve into its ripest functions'. All of the other groups had some justification for invading Egypt. Lock assessed, and then dismissed, their views, and concluded by proposing a six-point settlement of the issue: '(1) The formation of a purely Egyptian army; (2) The free pardon of Arabi and his comrades; (3) The formation of a purely Egyptian administration (potentially if not actually); (4) The

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[108] Fabien Magnin. *La politique positive et la question egyptienne* (Paris, 1882); Harrison. *Memoirs*, vol. II, pp. 123, 170; *Positivist Comments an Public Affairs* (1896), pp. 21–2; E. S. Beesly. *The Aggression in Egypt* (1882).

[109] LPC. *Annual Report for the Year 1882* (1883), p. 7; E. S. Beesly. *The London Positivist Society and the Situation in Egypt* (1883).

[110] Frederic Harrison. *The Crisis in Egypt* (1882), pp. 3, 5.

abolition of the Control, and the limitation of foreign interference to the supervision of the specially assigned revenues; (5) The reduction of the debt to the amount actually received; and (6) The payment of the war expenses by England.' Thus the Positivists' proposed remedy was that 'this nation shall leave the usurers and the Egyptian people to settle it . . . our fleet should be withdrawn from Egyptian waters, the Control should be given up, the bondholders should be left to shift for themselves, and the Egyptian Government should be informed that so long as the Canal is not injured we will not meddle with their country, nor allow any other nation to meddle with it'. Britain would in turn guarantee Egypt's neutrality by not allowing other foreign powers to interfere in its affairs.[111]

Blunt felt that at this time Harrison 'wielded great influence' and as 'the soundest and most courageous man on foreign policy then in the Liberal Party . . . might have prevented the war' if he could have acted earlier.[112] But it is their explanation of the Egyptian invasion rather than their solution for which the Positivists should be best remembered. Its sole rationale, Harrison insisted, was not to secure a pathway to India, but rather to ensure 'the money interest of certain bondholders and shareholders'. The 'real, and paramount aim of the English government', he insisted, was 'the forcing the Egyptian people . . . to submit to such a domestic régime as will continue to wring from them the usurious interest of loans almost forced on them by European gamblers'. That was 'the sole gist of the present imbroglio . . . the true object is to get the gamblers' 7% paid a little longer'. But once the occupation had commenced, withdrawal was impeded by other groups: 'We invaded Egypt, at first, in the interest of the bond-holders, for whom not a penny of our taxes ought to have been expended. We are staying there simply because our upper and middle classes are possessed by a blind passion for hoisting the British flag in every new territory that can be acquired.' As late as 1893 it was still noted that it was not international finance capital as such which prolonged the occupation. For, as Beesly noted, since the invasion 'the French have been calling on us to fix a time for evacuating Egypt. Their interests there are greater than ours. There is more French capital invested there than English, and the French residents are more numerous.'[113]

[111] B. Fossett Lock. *England and Egypt* (1882), pp. 8–14, 36; *Positivist Comments*, p. 24; LPS Papers, 1/1, f. 70.
[112] Blunt. *Secret History*, pp. 321–2.
[113] Harrison. *The Crisis in Egypt*, pp. 20–1; *National and Social Problems*, p. 199; Harrison Papers, 1/65, f. 8; *PR* (1893), 43–4.

THE WORK OF HARRISON, BEESLY AND QUIN

From the mid-1860s onwards three Positivist writers made constant contributions to the debate over international issues: Harrison, Beesly and Malcolm Quin. Indisputably the most influential of these was Frederic Harrison, who was President of the English Positivist Committee from 1880 to 1905.[114] The son of a stockbroker, born on the outskirts of London, as it then was, at Muswell Hill, Harrison received a 'moderate' Christian education which he gradually outgrew more 'on moral grounds than on intellectual'. Abjuring the pursuit of glory and heroism, by the age of fifteen he embraced instead a loftier ideal of 'duty and moral character'. Reaching Wadham at eighteen, in 1849, he found in Richard Congreve an exception to an otherwise depressing Oxford conventionality. Via Littré and Mill he encountered Comte, and first visited Paris in 1852. His *entrée* to the system was the view that what Positivism represented was empiricism triumphant, 'that the inductive conclusions from experience would ultimately supersede all intuitional and *a priori* beliefs'.[115] In London in the mid-1850s to read law, he gravitated instead towards philosophy and history. Between Congreve and F. D. Maurice the last of his orthodoxy was expunged. By the time of the Crimean War his politics were those of a 'young Radical of the Bright school'. The Indian revolt stirred up all his 'ingrained enthusiasm for real nationalities and my loathing for all forms of race oppression by conquerors'. 'From that day', he later wrote, 'I became an anti-Imperialist, as I am still, in the sense that our vast heterogeneous scattered bundle of dominions is not a normal and permanent development of English nationality, and in many ways retards and demoralises our true national life.' In November 1857 he agreed with Bridges that 'we can never look to obtain a permanent hold or any profit from India'. Rejecting the 'attempt to Europeanise or Christianise' India as 'puerile', Harrison began to move 'out of the position of English radicals'. He was, by then,

rather for Elizabeth's and Cromwell's policy than for Cobden's – that is throwing the whole of our moral weight backed by vigorous action into the free scale. I think serious war would not be necessary, peaceful as I am, I am almost prepared for it after thorough consideration and a decided policy clearly understood & announced.

At the time of the Mutiny he was not, however, willing to concede that this was a 'war of nationalities', and was averse to 'likening the foul hounds to the patriots of Italy & Hungary'. Privately he added that

[114] See generally Martha S. Vogeler's fine study, *Frederic Harrison. The Vocations of a Positivist* (Oxford, 1984).
[115] Harrison. *Memoirs*, vol. I, pp. 40, 45; Harrison Papers, 1/5, f. 36; Harrison. *Memoirs*, vol. II, p. 252.

I know there is no Indian nation & that their savage instincts are no result of patriotism – but it is folly to deny that there is the inevitable struggle of black man against white – native against European governed against the governors – subjects against their masters religion against religion the East against the West.

Like many Britons, thus, Harrison felt a forceful response to the rebellion was necessary:

I believe all that we have to do is to crush them like the Roman senate & rule them like a Roman emperor. Guarantee temporal order & look on all their religions as equally false & equally useful … these brutes have acted like tigers from their own point of view, & I should like to blow them from cannons myself. Them's my Indian sentiments.[116]

In 1858 he wrote that since 'a large proportion of natives acquiesce in our rule *at present* … I do not feel it would be justice to them to retire immediately', but that that rule had to be '*solely from the point of view of an intelligent and patriotic native*'. 'We have our Indian Empire – let us keep it, but not venture a step beyond', was thus his conclusion at this time.[117] The non-interventionist peace policy of 'we followers of Cobden and Bright', with sympathy for the nationalist aspirations of Italy, Hungary and other smaller peoples, was thus most attractive to him at this stage, and Bright was to Harrison 'really the only great public man we have'.[118]

It is difficult to ascertain exactly when this foreign policy became 'Positivist' for Harrison. By 1859 he was complaining of Bright that 'being without a foreign policy he is hampered'. In the early 1860s he supported intervention in favour of Poland. But it was East Asia which was probably most important to his shift of views. Here, after the 1860 Opium War, a new scramble for China had begun which would end with the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. For Harrison the breaking-point was probably the bombardment in 1863 of Kagoshima in Japan, where a city of 100,000 persons was destroyed in reprisal for the murder of one Briton, an act Harrison protested against as 'wanton wickedness'.[119] For he now concluded – indicating a final departure from Bright's Christian perspective – that

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[116] Harrison Papers, 1/4, ff. 54, 5, 47, 57.
[117] Harrison. *Memoirs*, vol. I, pp. 160, 173, 177, 181–2; Harrison Papers, 1/4, f. 209.
[118] Harrison. *Memoirs*, vol. II, p. 67; Harrison Papers, 1/2, f. 17.
[119] Harrison Papers, 1/6, f. 34; 1/11, f. 89. Harrison wrote: 'All the atrocities of modern times … pale before the wholesale ferocity of this' (*Bee-Hive*, 14 Nov. 1863, 4). Adelman assumes 1859 to mark Harrison's clear disillusionment with Cobden and Bright ('The Social and Political Ideas of Frederic Harrison', pp. 36, 77).

the 'religious' ground is the stumbling-block beneath everything as respects our dealings with non-Christian people, and ... no conclusive protest can be made that does not formally disown that very treacherous basis. When I see the resolute way in which people maintain their *right* to commit wrong in the name of Christian civilisation, I see no way but to go to the root of the matter, – the *humanitarian* as opposed to the 'civilisation' or 'Christianity' theory. On the Christian theory, the Japanese are *absolutely* inferior. On the human theory, they are *relatively* our equals, occasionally our superiors, and essentially our brothers.[120]

This, we will see, was to become *the* definitive theme of Positivist internationalism: Christianity as such was seen to provide a crucial underpinning for the 'civilisational' justification for imperialism. Harrison would reiterate in 1886 that

alone of all the harmonising forces, Humanity repudiates all kinds of exclusion: of race, of country, of class, of sect ... Christians burn with hostility to the Infidel; Deists despise the heathen; patriots curse the enemies of their country; Socialists preach the extermination of the rich ... Humanity alone is able to embrace all human good or force, to unite all men, and to fuse all classes, all sects, and all peoples.[121]

In early 1864 Harrison condemned Cobden and Bright for not speaking in the parliamentary debate on Kagoshima, arguing that from them alone 'could have come any adequate denunciation of a ferocious war of aggression', and describing the episode as 'a turning-point in our whole Eastern, one may almost say our whole foreign, policy ... Not the burning of a city, but a war of aggression, is the matter in question ... nothing but the naked fist of an aggressive war to open up a new trade.' Harrison now became convinced that in particular 'Mr Gladstone's Eastern policy was stimulated and coloured by Christian and anti-Mussulman sympathies', and that for some of his followers 'politics degenerated into a sort of Crusade between two forms of monotheistic Creed'.[122] Neither Cobden's economic internationalism nor Bright's Christian cosmopolitanism sufficed any longer to underpin a *humanitarian* foreign policy, which some Positivists did, however, see as a continuation of the anti-slavery agitation.[123] Harrison now announced his departure from the old political economy and the embracing of a Comtean position which stressed the relativism of economic 'laws' to

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[120] Harrison. *Memoirs*, vol. I, pp. 285–6, 289–90; Harrison Papers, 1/37, f. 55.
[121] Harrison. *A New Year's Address to the Positivists of New York* (1886), p. 3.
[122] *Bee-Hive* (13 Feb. 1864), 4; Harrison. *Memoirs*, vol. I, pp. 312–13. Bridges added that Gladstone's zealous Christianity made him 'incapable of treating the Muslim question' (to Laffitte, 6 June 1880, MAC, folder 2).
[123] E.g., S. H. Swinny, in F. S. Marvin, ed., *Western Races and the World* (Oxford, 1922), p. 139.

historical development. But established religious prejudice and reigning economic orthodoxy had alike become essential stumbling-blocks to international justice. And at the end of the day, behind religion stood another factor. Writing on Kagoshima, Harrison insisted: 'One thing can explain it, strange as it is – the devilish antipathies of race. In Europe, towards white men, towards Christians, the tenth part of this ferocity is impossible.'[124]

After instigating *International Policy*, which he proudly described as conflicting 'with every prejudice of the journalist Briton, national, literary, political, and religious', Harrison was involved as a leading member of the Jamaica Committee in protests against Governor Eyre's repressive policies, and in 1867 against the treatment of Fenian prisoners, whom he claimed to be the first to describe as 'honourable political opponents'. That year he also reiterated, in the article on 'Foreign Policy' in *Questions for a Reformed Parliament*, his view that British 'anti-national' policy was driven by aristocratic prejudice. By contrast, he thought the populace sympathised with 'the great revolutionary problem of nationalities, the re-settlement of nations in harmony with their wants, feelings, and history; the re-casting of the State-system into the new order of things in which dynasties, balance of power, and empires, shall be unknown'. He also protested against a British Abyssinian incursion, accurately foretelling that war in Egypt and the Sudan would follow. 'No ambition is too vast or wicked for the English aristocracy, pandering to the English merchant,' he lamented.[125] During the Franco-Prussian War, with Congreve, Beesly and Bridges, he supported intervention in aid of France; Congreve urged the sending of 50,000 British troops to stem Prussia's advance, being seconded by a Royal Navy Captain named Maxse, and opposed by Morley.[126] From the 1870s onwards, scarcely a year passed in which a new British imperial adventure – in Turkey, in Afghanistan, in Egypt, in southern Africa – did not incur Harrison's displeasure, which was voiced in weekly meetings, the press, periodicals and pamphlets. In the late 1870s and 1880s Afghanistan, then Egypt, were predominant. Southern Africa then loomed again, and India was never distant. Frequently he resisted what he regarded as infractions of international and public laws and norms, be it hanging captured Afghan soldiers and mullahs, wantonly violating treaties, or governing generally not by

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[124] *Bee-Hive* (14 Nov. 1863), 4.
[125] Harrison. *Memoirs*, vol. I, p. 358; Crompton Papers, Add. MS 71,701, f. 92; *Questions for a Reformed Parliament* (1867), p. 250; Harrison. *Memoirs*, vol. I, p. 345.
[126] Crompton Papers, Add. MS 71,701, f. 14. See Captain Maxse, RN. *A Plea for Intervention* (1871), Congreve *et al. Papers on the War*, and Henry Dix Hutton. *Europe's Need and England's Duty* (1870), p. 19.

Western ideals but by a duplicitous standard derived from the idea of 'civilisation' which left Britain with a policy of – mocking Disraeli – '*Imperium et Barbaries*', that is to say, 'military terrorism'. This left Britons free to contend that 'they are to hold themselves free from all the laws of war as understood in modern Europe; they are not bound to fight as civilised nations fight; if they are too few to subdue the country physically, they must terrorise it into submission', which was nothing but 'terrorism in fact'.[127] Always he condemned the fact that 'races of dark men [were] sacrificed to the pitiless genius of Free Trade, and at the blood-stained altar of colonial extension'. Finally, in the grand crisis of the Boer War, Harrison again found Britain's policies deeply flawed. In 1899 he helped to found the Transvaal Committee, then the South African Conciliation Committee, and was described as 'always to the front in all good causes' by a leading labour paper. Warning that Britain's colonies were increasingly being governed by 'Russian methods', he termed the war 'a new Imperial Raid, carried out in the name of the Queen, under the instigation of a combination of trading syndicates ... at the bidding and in the interest of cosmopolitan gamblers and speculative companies, in search of bigger dividends and higher premiums'.[128]

From the Egyptian crisis onwards Harrison usually stressed that Britain involved 'herself in international dilemmas to enable speculators to secure their usurious dividends ... The entire adventure of bloodshed and oppression falls back always on "financial interests"', the same group, 'money-lenders and shareholders', as he put it in 1882, which 'owns or influences half the Press in Europe' and 'influences, and sometimes makes, half the governments of Europe'. He readily leant his support to independence movements, such as 'Egypt for the Egyptians', though his own contacts here were limited.[129] But the principle applied equally 'for the free development of every distinct nationality', including 'the Irish and the Indian races' as well as 'the races of the Balkans or the banks of the Danube', and 'against the encouragement of any scheme of territorial aggression, however plausibly veiled ... against *all* oppression of conquered by their conquerors; we look for the dissolution of these empires

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[127] Frederic Harrison. *Martial Law in Kabul* (1880), pp. 13, 17; *National and Social Problems*, pp. 172, 174. Respecting Afghanistan, he noted that almost the only thing the Afghans were agreed on 'was to resist the presence of British soldiers and officials' (*ibid.*, p. 167).

[128] Harrison. *Realities and Ideals* (1908), p. 60; *The Boer War* (1900), p. 8; *Memoirs*, vol. II, pp. 129–30; *RN* (3 Sep. 1899), 4; *The Boer Republics* (1900), p. 16.

[129] Harrison. *National and Social Problems*, pp. xiii, 214, 209. He was led towards this position by Blunt; see Blunt's *Gordon at Khartoum* (1911), p. 248, where Harrison is described as initially taking 'the English instead of the Egyptian point of view'.

of conquest'. Eventually he hoped that 'industry, not empire, shall be the end of human ambition and the desire of true patriotism', with the 'vast tyrannous empires' being dissolved into 'smaller, homogeneous, industrial, and peaceful republics', led 'by no political party – by nothing but a religious movement'. Practically Harrison preferred a 'defensive alliance' between England and France to 'promote peace in Europe and the independence of the smaller nations and races'. He did not, however, favour a union of Britain with the United States, which he felt would be rather 'a curse than a blessing to the rest of the human family'.[130]

Harrison's anti-imperialist writings across the course of some sixty years consistently upheld the view that every 'fresh extension of the Empire beyond the Eastern or the Western oceans but extends the area of vulnerability and weakness; whilst the powers which surround its centre are gathering up resources with redoubled velocity'. By 1908 he was described as 'listened to with respect by all' on foreign affairs issues.[131] Harrison's later years were increasingly preoccupied with what he now termed 'the central movement – of all – German militarism'. 'Modern imperialism and the militarising of nations dates from the accession of Prince Bismarck to power in 1862,' he now argued,[132] concluding that Germany's 'thirst of national glory ... compels me to modify the anti-militarist policy which I have consistently maintained for 40 years past'. But even if the Franco-Prussian War was a central moment for the British Positivists, *International Policy* had after all justified German 'militarism', albeit reluctantly, as a necessary counterbalance to 'the Oriental legions of Russia'. And John Cotter Morison remained pro-German even in 1870–1. Yet now this problem had to co-exist with the 'bitter conviction' that Britain's own '*parvenu* Empire is doomed to early dissolution – is incapable of being made permanent or stable – and in the meantime is turning our political progress backwards, and may possibly lead us down into cruel ruin'.[133]

The temporary defeat of German militarism in 1918 did not, however, guarantee that international order so many hoped would follow the war. After Versailles, Harrison remained sceptical about the League of Nations. Even his own son Austin, however, thought there was inconsistency in

[130] Harrison. *National and Social Problems*, p. 248; *On Society* (1918), pp. 70–1; *National and Social Problems*, p. 261; *The German Peril: Forecasts 1864–1914 Realities 1915 Hopes 19–* (1915), p. 29 (written in 1867); *Realities and Ideals*, p. 59.
[131] Harrison. *Order and Progress* (1875), p. 298; *NA* (25 July 1908), 255.
[132] Harrison. *National and Social Problems*, p. xvi.
[133] Harrison Papers, 6/17 (1909); Harrison. *International Policy*, p. 118; Harrison. *National and Social Problems*, p. xxi.

Harrison's denunciation of imperial wars and his opposition to principled pacifism, which led him to disbelieve in the League and regard 'President Wilson as a Utopian'. Yet Harrison in fact felt that any such organisation should be far more ambitious, as well as based upon different principles. He insisted that a 'general and peaceful League of Nations will never be formed until the conversion of mankind to a purer moral and religious form of life'.[134] He was also deeply disappointed by the decision to 'keep Ireland, Egypt, Syria, and India out of the self-determination formula', and to allow other spoils to be divided amongst the victorious powers. Nor could he envision the League succeeding without 'solid, united, and recognised power, with international authority, and controlling at least armies of a million or more, perfectly equipped'. It was more likely, he feared, to 'become a potential source of international animosity and disputes'. Indeed he termed it 'as futile a combination as would be a universal Church composed of Christians, Jews, Musulmans, and Brahmans'. Worse still, by 1920 he was arguing that it was 'now certain that America will never work out in Europe the Wilsonian Covenant. Without America the League is bankrupt.' And if some nationalist claims went unrecognised, others threatened further disorder. Harrison worried that these 'promises to weak peoples, these potential mandates, seem about to breed endless trouble and strife', citing the instances of Serbia, Greece, Syria, Mesopotamia, the Armenians, and worst of all, Palestine, where Jews were in a small minority and many others were likely to be displaced by Zionist emigration.[135] Ironically, thus, amidst cries for a 'League of Nations', 'fierce ambitions of race, deadly rivalries of national extension' were more prevalent than ever before. After sixty years of preaching small-scale nationalism, it was a disappointing outcome, bathed in pathos. Yet Harrison still exulted that 'Empires are passing away! . . . The Covenant and the solvent cry of Self-determination have whirled round the world and have started ferments more potent than any of Rousseau, Luther, or Peter the Hermit.'[136] The thirty or forty nations within the British empire, he hoped, could now have their relations to Britain reconstructed.

After Harrison, the leading contributor on foreign affairs in the Society's journal, the *Positivist Review*, was Edward Beesly. Professor of History at University College, London, Beesly was amongst the most energetic

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[134] Austin Harrison. *Frederic Harrison*, pp. 147–8; Harrison. *Obiter Scripta*, p. 80. Frederick J. Gould elsewhere described Comte's system as 'a dream of the League of Nations' (*Towards A World At Peace*, 1919, p. 22).

[135] Harrison. *Novissima Verba* (1921), pp. 11, 24, 57, 83, 137, 187.

[136] Harrison. *Obiter Scripta*, pp. 17–18; *Novissima Verba*, p. 188.

middle-class supporters of trade unionism, editor of a leading labour journal, the *Bee-Hive*, and a strong advocate of state intervention to aid the working classes. He became, as Hyndman later put it, 'admired and even revered by advanced men of all shades of opinion, for his splendid and courageous work on behalf of the people and of the oppressed of every country'. A proponent as we have seen of Irish Home Rule, which he supposed the Irish would only get by making themselves 'a nuisance to England', and even of independence, Beesly rejected every extension of empire as 'tending to prolong militarism, to imperil the peace of the world, and to retard the industrial, political, and moral progress of mankind'.[137] He insisted that imperialism was unprofitable, and that as 'a general rule, where our trade is natural and legitimate, it in no way depends on our empire. Where it depends on our empire it is illegitimate, and is merely a form of taking taxes out of the pockets of the poor to put them into those of the rich.' He proclaimed himself 'entirely sceptical about importing Western industrialism into Eastern populations'. He noted in 1894 that anti-imperialism was a 'cause in which Positivists and Socialists will be found standing shoulder to shoulder'. He specifically praised Hyndman's views on 'the Asiatic and African policy of the capitalist class', maintaining that the working class, 'inheriting not military but industrial manners and ideas', had 'no thirst for war, conquest, or dominion'.[138] He also condemned the racialist conclusions drawn by Social Darwinists like Karl Pearson, and, like other Positivists, strenuously supported the small state principle.[139]

For his pains Beesly was taunted as 'Professor Beastly' by *Punch*, and attempts were made to force him from his Chair. His views were, however, widely advertised in the *Bee-Hive*, which reported meetings of the International Working Men's Association after its foundation in October 1864. However, there is scant evidence that the Positivist interpretation of internationalism penetrated far into the paper's general line in its early years. To the contrary, George Troup, a frequent leader writer in the mid-1860s, insisted, respecting the empire, that the 'working men of this country have an abiding interest in opening and keeping open new markets. It is a "bread

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[137] Edward Beesly. *The Social Future of the Working Class* (1869), p. 14; Hyndman. *Record*, p. 338; *PR* (1899), 57; Beesly. *Mind Your Own Business* (1890), p. 6; Beesly. *Home Rule*. Albert and Henry Crompton were also closely linked to the trade unionist George Howell, lending him Comte's works and, in Henry's case, sitting on the Royal Commission on Trades' Unions (Howell Collection, 1/11/18; 1/16/5).

[138] Beesly Papers, 23 (25 Dec. 1864); 1 (10 July 1873); *PR* (1894), 101; Beesly. *Home Rule*, p. 5; Beesly. *Socialists against the Grain* (1887). The *Positivist Review* was sometimes described as a 'socialist publication' (e.g., Robert Flint. *Socialism*, 1895, pp. 50–2).

[139] *PR* (1896), 176–82; Beesly Papers, 23 (15 Jan. 1865).

and cheese" interest with them … Their interest is to be found in the expansion of the empire, the increase and maintenance of the colonies, and the multiplication of men of their own race with whom they can buy and sell.'[140] The paper reiterated similar views on other occasions, supporting French colonisation in Algeria and denying that India cost Britain anything. It also repeatedly supported state-assisted emigration to the colonies. In the five years after the Paris Commune, however, the paper published far more Positivist contributions, notably by Bridges, Henry Crompton, Harrison and Beesly. In 1872, for instance, Crompton argued under the heading of 'International Policy' that 'the doctrine of non-intervention is false in theory and morally wrong, in that it disregards and casts aside the positive duties which England owes to the rest of the world'. The ideal advocated by Cobden and Bright was 'intrinsically one of self-interest', gave no 'real solution to international questions, and did not lay down principles upon which our national conduct should rest'. It thus needed to be replaced by the 'religious and Republican dogma, that the few are the servants of the many, and that devotion and self-sacrifice is due from the strong to the weak'.[141] Denouncing the 'popular creed that England is right to gratify her propensities at the expense of other peoples; that anything she may do to make herself greater or stronger must be right', Crompton insisted that the 'future task which England has to perform, is that of carrying to the less civilised races the results of industry and knowledge … not by arms or force, but by means suited to an era of peace and industry'. This meant repudiating 'the opening of foreign markets by force to British manufac-turers, or to obtain violently goods which we could not otherwise get'. He continued this line of reasoning in a lengthy series of articles on China, where he argued that instead of embracing 'a spirit of fair dealing and voluntary agreement', Britain had opted for 'commercial wars … to open out fresh markets for the produce of our manufacturing industries'. When Crompton raised the issue of Gibraltar as not only 'a constant source of irritation, but a cause of hatred', however, the *Bee-Hive* published a response which insisted that by the same principle Malta, Aden, Hong-Kong, India, Ceylon, the Cape of Good Hope, the West Indies, and Australia and New Zealand would all have to be restored. It then recommended

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[140] *Bee-Hive* (6 Aug. 1864), 4. Troup also had Southern sympathies in the American Civil War. See Harrison. *Before the Socialists*, pp. 63–4.

[141] *Bee-Hive* (29 May 1869), 4; (5 June 1869), 1; (3 Feb. 1872), 2–3. This met with strong praise from the old Owenite Lloyd Jones (10 Feb., 2), who supported intervention 'to aid truth against falsehood, to assist the right against the wrong, or the weak against the strong'.

the Lancashire operatives to prepare for the rainy day, which will assuredly come when the control of India and her markets is restored to the original inhabitants of that peninsula; they should have been prepared for the 'hard times' coming, when the aborigines of Australia, restored to their primitive hunting grounds, shall prefer the pleasures of the chase to the production of wool, or of beef and mutton at 6d. per lb. or shall decline to receive the overflow of a superabundant labour market.[142]

After Beesly, we should also note the indefatigable efforts of the Newcastle Positivist Malcolm Quin, who devoted more than thirty years to the cause but has been almost ignored by its historians. Having cut his intellectual teeth in Leicester secularist circles, Quin arrived at Newcastle in 1878 and became involved with the local Foreign Affairs Committee, which debated, among other issues, 'the justice of British rule in India'. After reading Comte, he wrote to Congreve in 1879, and by 1883 had set up his first Positivist church, later garnering financial support from a local well-to-do Quaker, and hatching a scheme to become an independent Positivist activist with the assistance of £200 raised from worthy brethren. Quin alienated a number of other Positivists, particularly in London, where one complained of his '*avowedly hostile attitude* to our body'. (But Swinny, while describing him as 'extraordinarily vain', said he was 'really an able man, with a good literary capacity and a true political eye', while Beesly called him 'much the most capable of Congreve's disciples', and another Positivist, Walter Westbrook, viewed Quin as Congreve's 'disciple and really his successor'.)[143] Quin remained intensely interested in Positivism as a religion, but soon attacked the occupation of Burma. By 1888 he began to condemn the 'swollen empire, subsisting by oppression and servitude', and to describe industry as 'the motive of war ... the competitions of the market lead to the strife of nations'. Now he assailed 'an arrogant imperialism or a domineering philanthropy ... constant only to its tendencies of selfish indifference where we are confronted with strength, and of bungling interference where we can trample on weakness'. He accused the British of having 'more of the mere greed of the market' mixed in their idea of empire than other nations. In the mid-1890s he began a series of 'Political Tracts' which continued until 1910, intended 'to bring the spirit and principles of Positivism to bear on international policy'. Amongst these was *The Nation and the Jubilee* (1897), which was translated into French, German, Swedish,

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[142] *Bee-Hive* (10 Feb. 1872), 1; (24 Feb. 1872), 1–2; (24 Feb. 1872), 2–3.
[143] Quin. *Memoirs*, p. 60; Ingram Papers, D2808/1/25; D2808/1/9; D2808/31/4; D2808/54/28; Beesly to Constant Hillemand, 8 Feb. 1901, MAC; Ingram Papers, D2808/65/58.

Spanish and Portuguese. An 'open avowal of republicanism', the tract condemned the

Greed, aggression, war, international disturbance, a temper of ridiculous apprehension alternating with the arrogance of power, an unhappy exclusiveness, a revived militarism, a burdensome expenditure, a passion for unlimited domination, substituting itself for the generous purposes of fraternity and peace – these are some of the evils represented by our monarchy, investing itself with the style and pretensions of empire.

Though Quin proclaimed that Positivism 'obliged him to be a patriot', he still dismissed the monarchy as an 'anachronism' which had 'long ceased to be an instrument of good order in the State', and which now presided over a process of 'national retrogradation'. Responding to a critical letter from Ingram, Quin contended that the Jubilee celebrations had been 'in a small degree really spontaneous & popular, in a large degree artificial and manufactured'. Most of his focus, however, was on Britain's foreign policy. Quin protested against interference with Turkey in 1896, acknowledging the 'great faith of Mohammed' but also 'the still nobler Christian Church of Western Europe', and proclaiming that he was 'bound also to respect the national independence of Turkey, as I respect the national independence of my own country, while recognising and deploring the defects of both'. At the same time he complained that

I can find no words strong enough to condemn the self-righteousness, arrogance, & hypocrisy of English policy at the present time. It is in my judgment worse than it has been at any time during the last quarter of a century – less generous, less tempered by noble ideals, less *sane*.[144]

Believing that 'the greatest of all political questions ... the question of international policy' was 'moving towards a catastrophe', Quin founded in 1898 a 'Patriotic Union', and announced that all the imperial powers should aim 'to gradually and prudently grant complete self-government and independence to the various nationalities and colonies included in, or held in subjection to them, with a view to their free and voluntary co-operation on a basis of common interests and opinions'. Quin sought, he insisted, to substitute for the principle of empire that of nationality, meaning by this that

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[144] Malcolm Quin. *Religion of Humanity* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1887), pp. 4–5; *The New Religion* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1888), p. 7; *Positivism and the Religious Revolution* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1889), p. 9; *Memoirs*, p. 162; *Positivism and Social Problems* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1895), p. 11; *The Nation and the Jubilee* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1897), pp. 2–3; *England and Turkey* (1896), p. 1; Ingram Papers, D2808/47/4.

every existing self-governing community, however low in the scale of civilisation it may be, and however imperfect its modes of government, ought to be exempt from forcible external interference, even where such an interference might apparently be justifiable; and further, that it is desirable to gradually and prudently accord complete independence to such nationalities and colonies as are at present held in subjection by existing empires.

Though he termed Britain 'the greatest disturber of peace of the world', Quin was also one of Britain's earliest critics of American imperialism; he now condemned as 'a reckless and indefensible menace to the peace of the world' the United States' war with Spain over Cuba, insisting he would 'welcome the independence of Cuba just as he would welcome the independence of Ireland. He desired the orderly and peaceful breakup of the Spanish empire just as he did the orderly and peaceful breakup of the British empire.'[145] He admitted that 'the principle of imperial decomposition must be applied carefully', but equally hoped that 'all oppressed peoples – including the Armenians – will have force to win liberty for themselves'. He was particularly active during the Boer War, 'possibly . . . the meanest of all our wars'. Finding no justification for Britain's interference with the South African Republic, he condemned the effort 'to crush an infant commonwealth' as 'contrary to its rights as a self-governing community'. He denied that he was an 'apologist for the Boers', asserting that in religion and 'domestic policy' there was 'much to condemn and deplore'. But Quin made flags of the Transvaal and Orange Free States, hung them over his altar for a month, and then forwarded them on to President Kruger with a message of congratulation for the 'heroism of a struggle for liberty' shown in his cause.[146] He also organised a 'Requiem for the citizens of the Transvaal Republic and Orange Free State, who died defending their country against British aggression', and was even visited in Newcastle by two Boer envoys. At the end of the war he urged a restoration of independence to the Boers, then turned to condemn British policy towards China. During the 1906 election he described the 'spoliation of backward peoples, and that insolent encroachment on their freedom' as 'the immediate and direct cause of all

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[145] Malcolm Quin. *The Patriotic Union* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1898), p. 1; *The Patriotic Union* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1900), p. 3; *Political Tracts. III. England and the Czar's Rescript* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1899), p. 2; *I. The Spanish-American War* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1898), p. 2; Ingram Papers, D2808/F/1 (*Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 28 Apr. 1898); D2808/D/1.
[146] Ingram Papers, D2808/47/4; Malcolm Quin. *Political Tracts. IV. England and the Transvaal* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1899), p. 7; *VII. Positivist Counsels to Electors* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1900), p. 2; *VI. The War in South Africa* (1900), pp. 1, 4.

recent wars'. Quin also condemned the effects of imperialism on the British character, arguing that

Under its insidious and fatal influence it is losing the characteristics which once distinguished it among the nations – a temper heroic and magnanimous, a generous passion for liberty, an instinctive horror of usurpation and injustice, a high-minded and ready sympathy with small countries struggling to shake off an alien yoke, a disposition to protect and shelter the oppressed, and that sober preference for peace which is the most fitting attribute of a nation of workers … To the noble zeal for national freedom has succeeded a greedy appetite for plunder and encroachment; the sagacious choice of peace as the highest of our country's interests has given place to a puerile delight in military display; for the strong and calm pursuit of our domestic development have been substituted the feverish expectations of the gambler in regard to the exploitation of conquered territories.[147]

After his church closed in 1910, Quin spent most of his energies trying to 'positivise' Catholicism. Though he had earlier condemned it as 'social despotism', Quin now committed himself to socialism as an industrial system based upon 'a high and common humanity', joining the Independent Labour Party for three or four years, chiefly because of its devotion to peace, and opposing British involvement in the First World War. Restating Positivist international policy in 1919, Quin emphasised that in the war Britain and its allies had 'played exactly the same part as that for which they have reproached Germany', and moreover 'with all the greater cowardice and unscrupulousness, because, for the most part, they have not done it in Europe, but … against the backward inhabitants of Asia and Africa', an astonishing if resolutely consistent claim to make given the overwhelmingly self-righteous moral climate of the period. The League of Nations, he also thought, was a 'league of oppression and hate' aimed at 'reducing Germany to a state of political slavery, and providing for her economic helplessness and effacement'.[148]

These concerns drove Quin to develop a fairly sophisticated account of imperialism. Proclaiming that 'there are undoubtedly powerful classes in this country which are interested in pressing one or other' of the motives of national pride, naval or military prestige, religious sectarianism or political

[147] Malcolm Quin. *The Patriot Boers* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1902), p. 3; *Second Annual Circular* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1900), p. 7; McGee. *A Crusade for Humanity*, p. 147; Malcolm Quin. *Political Tracts. X. The Peace in South Africa* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1902); *V. Empire and Humanity* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1899), p. 5; *XI. Issues of the General Election* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1906), p. 3; *IX. English Policy in the Far East* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1902), pp. 3–7.
[148] Quin. *The Church of Humanity* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1896), p. 13; *Thoughts for Electors and Non-Electors* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1910), p. 11; *Memoirs*, pp. 224–7; *The Politics of the Proletariat*, pp. 5–6.

philanthropy, he insisted that 'the main justification which is pleaded for our policy is that it tends to the security and advancement of our trade; and therefore, I repeat, it is most accurately described as a policy of Industrial Imperialism'. We see, here, too, an extension of the old Cobdenite analysis. For Quin, militarist imperialism was 'a desperate effort to call into existence a new market to redress the balance of the old ... not by the proper policy of industry, but by the improper policy of war. The machine gun and the battle-ship are invoked as auxiliaries of the manufactory and the Exchange.' He then urged the abandonment of 'Industrial Imperialism' for eight reasons:

(1) because it involves us in injustice, spoliation and oppression towards peoples weaker than ourselves; (2) because we can only preserve our ascendancy over those peoples by a superiority of military force; (3) because our action with regard to them provokes similar action on the part of other countries, and increases national animosities and rivalries throughout the world; (4) because an inevitable consequence of this is that England, in common with other countries, is under the necessity of constantly adding to burdensome armaments, which are themselves an incubus and charge upon industry, and to which no one can assign a limit; (5) because the state of international unsettlement and anxiety which is thus created is of all others the most unfavourable to healthy industrial development; (6) because England, from the character and limitations of her natural resources is more dependent than any other nation upon the maintenance of the peace of the world; (7) because our manufacturing and commercial greatness has been built up not by war and conquest, but by energetic and skilful labour, and the power which has sufficed to create it is the only power which will serve to maintain it; (8) because the multiplication of our imperial responsibilities and the constant increase of international anxieties withdraw attention and force from the field of domestic progress, and above all from that task of industrial reorganisation which is the greatest practical aim of our time.[149]

Quin thus resolutely opposed any pretext for imperial expansion, contending in early 1899 that

No nation is warranted in interfering with the freedom, domestic policy, or possessions of other nations, either for the spread of its religious opinions, for scientific exploration, for the accomplishment of political or supposed philanthropic purposes, or for the extension of its trade.

And Quin must surely have been amongst the first to base a claim for human loyalty to humanity upon what we now term globalisation, or a common cultural identity rooted in international commerce:

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[149] Quin. *Political Tracts. II. Industrial Imperialism* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1898), pp. 2, 6–7; *The Problem of Human Peace* (1916), pp. 190–208.

The nation, 'the country,' in any conception of it, has ceased to have, if it ever had, paramount and exclusive claims upon the individual. The one claim which is universal and incontestable is the claim of Humanity. That claim is the criterion and measure of all others. An Englishman, Frenchman, German, Austrian, or Italian of the twentieth century can see that for his life, in its lower and higher planes, he is dependent not upon his own nation, but upon Humanity. The food which he eats, the clothes which he wears, the house which he inhabits, the fruits and flowers of his garden, the education which he receives, the philosophies and sciences which enlighten him, the arts which enchant and inspire him, the industries which sustain him – these he owes not to the unaided mind and life of his own country, great as it may be, but to the mind and life of Humanity.[150]

UNIVERSAL HOME RULE: CARVING EMPIRES INTO REPUBLICS

As we have seen, Comte imagined that world order would ultimately rest upon a federation of small states. Patriotism was not to be absorbed in some 'bare cosmopolite humanitarianism', insisted Bridges, for it was, echoed Harrison, a 'chimerical dream that Country should be absorbed in Humanity, or that the healthy bond of a real Patriotism should be merged in the vaster whole'. While an untempered patriotism was identified with militarist nationalism by Positivists, extensive conquests in their view also sapped this true, fruitful patriotism and undermined the true virtues of the nation. Respecting India, the Positivists asserted, for 'the English people the position of conquerors has been and is deeply demoralising; tainting what should be the noblest of virtues, patriotism, with the poison of greed and injustice, and incapacitating us for taking an upright and elevated view of all questions of foreign policy'. Militarism in general, then, was merely a perverted form of patriotism, and

the necessary condition of its extinction is the substitution, for the overgrown aggregates . . . of smaller industrial communities in which the genuine State feeling may again revive, in which 'men may dwell with their people.' The very conception of monarchy would die out in such an atmosphere. Republics they must be by all sound political considerations.[151]

What, then, was to be the ideal Positivist republic? Firstly, as we have seen, the state had to be relatively small, akin to the Greek *polis* or perhaps

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[150] *EW* (15 Apr. 1899), 236; Quin. *The Politics of the Proletariat*, p. 53.
[151] *PR* (1898), 66; (1896), 45; *Positivist Comments*, p. 45; Richard Congreve. *Two Addresses. I. Systematic Policy. II. Education* (1870), pp. 18–19.

Holland.[152] Beesly thought that if the 'most perfect state is that which conducts itself with justice towards other states, and does most for the happiness of its own citizens ... in proportion as any State exceeds a very moderate size, its citizens enjoy less of the advantages that ought to follow from civic union'. Thus Britain's 'vast empire not only gives us no strength, but is the direct cause of our weakness'.[153] Writing in 1864, he insisted that it was the great powers who

at the present moment are armed to the teeth, and are continually menacing each other with a resort to arms. Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Norway, and Sweden have not taken part in any European war for forty years. If, indeed, Western Europe were welded into one compact State, as in the days of the Roman Empire, the result would be peace, as it was then. But such a unification we do not expect now. The only organisation which can in any way resemble and replace it is a federation; and a federation must evidently be composed of much smaller communities than the present great States.

Henry Crompton, also referring to Greece, thought that 'a future state system of small republics' was preferable, because 'the smallest political communities to be seen in history ... have been consistent with the highest form of national feeling, with the noblest patriotism, and the most splendid devotion'. John Ingram agreed:

the existence of these over-grown societies ... prevents the due superintendence of the whole life of the people by the central authority, and throws into the shade the needs and claims of the populations distant from the seat of power. It dulls the sense of patriotism, which can scarcely be felt – except in the spurious form of imperialist pride – for a monstrous aggregation of territories, the inhabitants of which are bound together by no ties of sentiment, or are even rendered mutually repellent by historic memories or by diversity of character.[154]

This principle had of course to be applied to Britain itself. James Geddes insisted that it would 'not be possible to deal effectually with our Pauperism until England is broken up into communal units, small enough to secure the action of local organised opinion as the grand social force'. Harrison thought Britain might plausibly be subdivided into four states, presumably Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England, and Europe into one hundred and fifty.[155] Since Positivism was 'hostile to every proposal for aggrandising the

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[152] Holland was the choice of the French Positivist Pierre Laffitte (*The Positive Science of Morals*, 1908, p. 186).
[153] *PR* (1893), 41, 35.
[154] Beesly Papers, 23; *Bee-Hive* (27 Dec. 1873), 3; John Kells Ingram. *The Final Transition: A Sociological Study* (1905), pp. 53–4.
[155] Geddes. *The Month Gutemberg*, p. 48; Harrison. *On Society*, p. 71; Blunt. *My Diaries*, vol. I, p. 66. Gould also presumed that Britain needed four parliaments (*EW*, 15 May 1911, 71).

State, whether of the imperial or the communistic type', governments would have their military function reduced strictly to self-defence, and be shorn of any connection to religion. Yet they would still

organise an efficient police, administer equal, cheap, speedy law; protect, assist, stimulate, and moderate industry, prevent groups encroaching on others; stop bands of marauders who seek to make aggression on other peoples, civilised or barbarous; provide for the health of great cities and of rural districts by establishing local bodies charged with providing air, open spaces, recreation grounds for the people, pure, unlimited, gratuitous water, which stands on the same footing as air, primary education, healthy comfortable homes for the people, museums, galleries, libraries, and other means of culture.[156]

Secondly, this republican ideal was both anti-monarchical and anti-aristocratic, and comprised a critique of the vices incident to both. (Occasionally it reached back to invoke a domestic republican tradition.[157]) As jingoism reached its peak during the Boer War, other Positivists besides Quin noted its connection with the growing cult of monarchism, as well as the degradation of hero-worship in modern popular culture. One asserted that the 'corner-stone of Imperialism is the throne, and the glamour surrounding it', and noted that

step by step with the growth of the Empire craze there has been an intensification of the spirit of what is called loyalty to the throne, but what is really a degenerate worship of wealth and social status. The English people … are ever ready at the call of their favourite news-sheet to become feverishly excited over the movements of a yacht, a race-horse, an actress, a cricketer, a football player, a notorious member of 'the smart set,' or a royal personage.

But, as Harrison stressed, the 'mere absence of a King does not make a republic; and commonwealths without hereditary sovereigns have often been warlike enough … A truly industrial Republic is peaceful by its essence; and it is only a truly industrial Republic that is.'[158] 'Properly speaking', Congreve noted in an 1873 lecture, 'the *Republic* is the condensed expression for all our strictly political aspirations': 'Not an aristocratic Republic-as England … The sociocratic Republic-*La chose Publique*.

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[156] Frederic Harrison. *George Washington and Other American Addresses* (1901), p. 170; *On Society*, p. 72.

[157] E.g., Robert Newman. *John Milton* (1886), p. 25, where Milton's republicanism is praised. For the republican context in this period see Frank Prochaska. *The Republic of Britain* (2000), pp. 98–144. The overlap of the more political side of Positivism with the views of radical republicans like William James Linton is worth noting, as is its continuation of aspects of J. G. A. Pocock's 'Atlantic Republican' tradition; see Pocock. *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton, 1975).

[158] *PR* (1902), 93; Frederic Harrison. *The Industrial Republic* (1890), pp. 15–16; Harrison. *Order and Progress*, pp. 117–18.

The welfare of the whole in its due subordination to past and future the constant object, as opposed to the prominence of government of separate interests.' This he assumed would be best served by a 'federal republic'. Yet we must recall that the Religion of Humanity would serve to guide this system, as Congreve again emphasised:

Most certainly the system of small states which is the ultimate aim of Positivist Policy implies a spiritual direction outside them singly and permeating them all. But on the other hand the establishment of such a church implies the existence of such a system of small states, each of which singly is not strong enough to be oppressive. Empire and Church are antagonistic in their principles.[159]

The question of how democratic the 'sociocratic' republic would be was a difficult one given the stinging criticisms we have noted by Mill and others of Comte's politics in theory, as well as of his ill-conceived flirtation with Louis Napoleon's dictatorship. Congreve aspired to the 'extinction' of elections, and offered some justification for dictatorship. Some Positivists, like Ingram, denied being democrats in the sense that this implied promoting 'the supposed interests of any particular class or even any particular nation' rather than those 'of the general welfare of humanity'. Here the task of the 'new spiritual order, renouncing all wealth and temporal power', would be to mediate between rich and poor, the working classes being deemed incapable of judging accurately on political matters.[160] Comte did believe that the 'doctrine which builds up the universal religion upon the subordination of the intellect to the heart' had 'its origin necessarily among the revolutionary party'. Partly this was because of their latent moral superiority, and more importantly their 'absence of ambition for wealth or rank'. To Comte himself such republicanism, however, explicitly excluded 'the metaphysical doctrines which Positivism has always decidedly combated, namely, those of equality and of the sovereignty of the people', as well as the idea of 'right', which once 'excluded from political language' would be replaced by 'duty'. Harrison's formulation, however, was much more in keeping with the traditional rhetoric of British radicalism. Republicanism meant

that government which represents the mass of the people without privileged families of any kind, or any governing class, or any hereditary office. It is government in the name of the people, in the interests of all equally, in sympathy with the

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[159] Add. MS 45,243, ff. 141–2; 45,263, f. 63.
[160] Richard Congreve. *Religion of Humanity. Annual Address* (1893), p. 9; Ingram Papers, D2808/D/3, D/2; John Kells Ingram. 'Positivism', in R. H. I. Palgrave, ed., *Dictionary of Political Economy* (3 vols., 1913), vol. III, p. 172.

people; where, so far as the State is concerned, neither birth, nor wealth, nor class, give any prerogative whatever.[161]

Such rhetoric was not only tactical, however. For the Positivists did clearly invest the working classes with great, even revolutionary, expectations, and historians have noted more than a passing resemblance here to Marx's materialist conception of history.[162] Beesly, certainly, assumed Comte thought that the 'working class is not, properly speaking, a class at all, but constitutes the body of society. From it proceed the various special classes, which we regard as organs necessary to that body.'[163] Affiliated with this expectation was the hope, as Harrison expressed it, that any change in foreign policy could be best initiated by the working classes: 'This great issue of our age – the replacing of the old international policy of war, aggression, and rivalry by the new internal policy that has yet to be of peace, forbearance, and mutual confidence, – especially concerns that great labouring class of the community, and its best hopes lie in their help.' They alone, he urged assembled representatives of trade unions, co-operative societies and political clubs, had

nothing to gain and everything to lose by this policy of national aggrandisement. Your first interest is peace, for the horrors of war fall first and heaviest on you. You are the bulk of the people, who suffer most and first in times of national distress. You are not dazzled by the prizes and honours of an adventurous campaign. These new markets which our great merchants are ever seeking to 'open up' only derange the labour market at home, bringing violent gambling in the employment of capital, to be followed by gluts, reaction, and slack trade upon an over-stocked market and an over-stimulated labour population.[164]

The assumption that there was thus a 'natural' antipathy to empire and propensity to peace amongst the working classes was widely held amongst Positivists, and was asserted by Harrison as early as 1868. In the dark days between the decline of Chartism and the revival of the reform agitation, the Positivists showed no reluctance to stand 'shoulder to shoulder by the workmen', with Congreve asserting that they must become '*citizens*, in the fullest sense of the term'. Amongst the middle classes they were practically alone in their support of the Paris Commune of 1871, which they regarded as exemplifying Comtist decentralist principles, and when Beesly

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[161] Comte. *Eight Circulars*, p. 88; *General View*, p. 215; *Letters*, p. 12; *General View*, p. 400; Harrison. *National and Social Problems*, p. 107.
[162] Hayek. *Counter-Revolution*, p. 139.
[163] Quoted in J. Morrison Davidson. *Eminent Radicals* (1880), p. 173.
[164] Harrison. *The Crisis in Egypt*, pp. 5–6.

urged that Britain 'join with Russia, Austria, and Italy in protesting against, and, if needful, in preventing by force any territorial spoliation'.[165]

The Positivist focus on the working class was to become particularly important after the revival of socialism in the 1880s. It was then recognised that there were some important parallels between Positivist and socialist politics, despite major differences. Both stressed the community rather than the individual; thus Ingram agreed that Patrick Geddes was right to advise young men to adopt the name 'Socialist' 'for the present – as a protest against Individualism'. Positivists announced themselves 'heartily at one with the Social Democrats in their opposition to Imperialism', while deprecating their ideals of revolutionism and class war, and invariably preferring moral force to revolution. But while Hyndman would accuse Harrison of anti-socialist agitation,[166] Harrison can in some respects be classed among the socialists, though not the communists, writing that

If a Socialist is one who looks forward to a reorganisation of society in the interest of the masses – what Comte calls 'the incorporation of the proletariat into the social organism' – one who fervently desires such an end and labours to bring it about – then I am so far a Socialist. If socialism means the abolition of personal appropriation of capital by force of law, then I look on such a dream as the era of social chaos, and moral and material ruin.[167]

This entailed rejecting the communism of Proudhon, Marx – a 'terrorist' – and Lassalle, as based on the 'false assumption, viz. that all the men should be forced to live in the ways their neighbours shall direct as most useful to the convenience of the masses'. But Harrison accepted

current schemes for the State acquisition of railways, of mines, of ports and docks, of large tracts of land, or of banks; for the State control of all academies and schools; for the feeding of school pupils; for old age pensions; for the support of the poor and helpless; for an Eight-hour Day – or a Seven-hour Day; for a minimum wage; for a revision of the Suffrage; for a reduction of armaments; or for the reorganisation of local government; and generally of the whole parliamentary and imperial system.[168]

[165] Harrison. *The Political Function of the Working Classes* (1868), p. 20; Harrison. *New Year's Address, 1887*, pp. 6–7; Royden Harrison, ed. *The English Defence of the Commune* (1971), p. 63; *NR* (22 Jan. 1871), 55.
[166] Geddes Papers, NLS, 10524, f. 14; *PR* (1900), 108; H. M. Hyndman. *Further Reminiscences* (1912), p. 90.
[167] Harrison. *National and Social Problems*, p. xv. On the relation between Positivism and Social Democracy see *PR* (1900), 107–10.
[168] Harrison. *Order and Progress*, p. 39; Harrison. *National and Social Problems*, pp. xxx–xxxi. Ingram supported old age pensions, the provision of useful work for the unemployed and healthy housing built for the poor at public expense, amongst other measures (Ingram Papers, D2808/D/3).

Positivists thus counselled a substantial sphere of state economic activity, even if private ownership of much of the means of production would continue.[169] They were consequently sometimes torn between praising what they approved of in socialism and disdaining what they disliked. Beesly insisted to Ingram that 'I assure you that like yourself I look with disapproval and alarm at the growth of Socialism and the tendency to mark by legislation social amelioration which can only be really established by moral and religious agencies.' But Congreve could write in 1888 that

We here are all Socialists in a degree. It is the special signification of the term which we reject, preferring our own proper name – Sociocrats. This name is enough to remind us constantly that the forces of society, whatever their amount, are, as creations of social effort, bound to be exerted for the good of society.[170]

Such a constitution could easily be construed as 'socialist', but as easily not. Some Positivists, indeed, rejected state education as presaging 'the state becoming, in fact, a church of officials, infinitely narrower and more prejudicial to the free growth of our faculties than the denomination of any Christian sect'. And while by the 1890s there was evidence of growing agreement on the possibility of peaceful change, a major gulf still existed over the Religion of Humanity, and the precedence of moral over political and economic transformation. Comte had insisted respecting the communists of his day that the 'chief difference between our own solution and theirs is that we substitute moral agencies for political'. Congreve would reiterate in 1891 that he regarded 'religion as the indispensable remedy for the disorder which has affected the whole of the social existence', and that this was 'a sufficient statement of the difference between us and the body of existing socialists, who too often recoil from the very *word* religion'. At the end of the day, however, many Positivists recognised the vastly greater appeal of socialism to the many; hence Quin wrote to Ingram, bemoaning the Webbs' tendency to term the latter a 'Socialist', that 'Socialism, in fact, in spite of, or perhaps because of, the good propensities of many who profess it, is our real enemy – an enemy so powerful that I often doubt

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[169] This mixture was attractive to early associates of Owen like John Gray, as well as the Fourierists, and some later New Liberals. The Russian Comtist and former aristocrat and general writing as William Frey thought Comte's ideal tended towards 'a *complete and thorough annihilation of ownership of any kind*' (*Under What Conditions Positivism Can Successfully Compete with Socialism*, 1885, p. 16). Frey had established a Positivist community in Kansas before moving to London in 1884.

[170] Beesly to Ingram, Ingram Papers, D2808/7/42 (12 Apr. 1907); Richard Congreve. *Religion of Humanity. Annual Address* (1888), pp. 8–9.

whether, for a long time to come, we shall have power to cope with it.'[171] It was a mighty understatement.

There remained the nightmarish problem (as it would transpire) of how to create a world of federated republics out of existing imperial systems, conquest being always easier than dignified withdrawal. The Positivists acknowledged late in the century 'that an abrupt termination of the situation thus created is inadmissible. Prudence no less than justice requires that we should prepare for retiring. But justice no less than prudence forbids a retirement for which adequate preparation has not been made'. Comte's initial advice, in 1855, had been that 'Positivists . . . must at present advise, as the prevailing rule, the maintenance of the *statu quo* in international relations.' Yet he also linked this to an ideal of increasing intervention which involved the 'entirely voluntary combination of all the Western States to organise the police of the seas throughout the human planet'. This implied a much more substantial scheme of international government, indeed one much more radical than the later League of Nations, since it entailed an impressive military force.[172] Comte was aware that juxtaposing these ideals created various paradoxes. One was that, consistently applied, all empires had to be treated similarly. Hence if pressure was placed on Russia to decompose, Comte confessed, the 'Tsar, if he wished to recriminate, might as well profess a desire to deliver the Provençals from the yoke of the Parisians, by representing as oppressive the pretended homogeneity which is officially proclaimed as existing between the Gascons and the Normans'.[173]

Radicalism, however, offered no adequate answer to this question either. Cobden and Bright, Harrison wrote in *International Policy*, had concluded that 'the true policy of a country like England is to withdraw almost entirely from diplomatic or national action in any state of Europe; that her sole duty is to be friendly with all, to have alliances and even relations with none'. This, he believed, was false: 'the only effectual mode of closing the era of

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[171] Henry Crompton. *Sermon, Delivered at the Church of Humanity* (1889), p. 9; Comte. *General View*, pp. 173–4; Add. MS 45,254, f. 92; Ingram Papers, D2808/47/64 (4 Apr. 1906).

[172] *PR* (1895), 88; Comte. *Letters*, pp. 48, 52. Laffitte suggested that 'under the name of the *Navy of the West*, the establishment of a public force which, besides safeguarding a useful commerce, shall be specially employed in protecting the backward populations against attempts at oppression' (*A General View of Chinese Civilisation*, 1887, pp. vi–vii).

[173] Comte. *Letters*, pp. 14–15.

weak and restless intervention is to substitute for it a system of definite action'. But what action? Not merely 'Free trade, peace, commerce, industry', which were 'with them the ends, not the means, of public prosperity'. Instead it required

the uniform education of the human powers, whether in communities or in man; and of these the social and generous instincts are the highest. It implies an intricate social union; control, government, and association; it cannot exist without mutual support, trust, and co-operation; the protection of the weak by the strong; the subordination of the unwise to the wise; the combination of all in common duties; the sacrifice of many personal desires; the willingness to bear the common burdens.

Positivism thus had to propose some mixture of intervention and non-intervention of an entirely new type. Upholding the status quo was inadequate if 'decomposition' and the protection of smaller states and weaker peoples was the order of the day. And in any case actual imperial rule was deteriorating markedly in its cruelty both in the scale (e.g., India) and barbarity (the Congo) in the last third of the century. This implied a justification for substantial interference in many possible scenarios, particularly, as Ingram expostulated to Congreve, arguing against Quin in 1898, where 'gross tyranny or cruelty' was involved.[174]

But where to start? In the first instance decomposition was a European issue. But the trend was here also partly moving in the opposite direction. European nationalism, thought Ingram, notably in Germany and Italy, had been 'dictated by urgent motives of a temporary nature'. If some states had fused into integration, others were centripetally disintegrating. Hungary, Bohemia, Norway, Finland, Poland should thus become independent. But, in Ingram's view,

Their dissolution ought to be left to the gradual operation of opinion and feeling, utilising conjunctures as they occur. Governments ... ought to move in the direction of administrative decentralisation within their respective spheres, permitting and even encouraging the degree of independence demanded by different local conditions and aptitudes, and thus preparing and tending towards an inevitable future ... [then] the time will arrive when the composition of States will be universally decided, not by forcible compression, but by the natural and historical affinities and consequent inclinations of the people.[175]

The problem, however, lay chiefly outside Europe. This involved distinguishing between the different needs of various parts of existing empires. Ingram in 1904 divided Positivist anti-imperial policy into three branches:

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[174] *International Policy*, pp. 112–13; *Bee-Hive* (3 Feb. 1872), 2–3; Add. MS 45,228, f. 266.
[175] Ingram. *The Final Transition*, pp. 56–7.

that respecting colonial or settler possessions, which should prepare for independence; treatment of 'the old Asiatic nations', to be handled with veneration and respect; and approaches to 'the Fetichistic populations', which the West should assist as 'patrons and protectors' instead of exploiting their labour in ways which tended practically to 'revive the system of slavery'.[176] Positivists wrote relatively little, except in the case of Ireland, about the first group, since it posed the smallest problem. Respecting the second, their consistent observation was that European institutions did not necessarily have to be imposed upon Asia. Nor did they accept the popular and quasi-official Millian argument that despotism was a legitimate mode of ruling 'barbarous' nations so long as their improvement was notionally pursued at the same time. For tyranny, they contended, undermined the liberty of both ruler and ruled. As Henry Ellis, who had served under Garibaldi, wrote in 1908, the

root of the evil is that we have deprived these peoples of their freedom. No social evolution . . . is worth anything if it is not really free. It is only in a state of freedom that a nation is enabled to show of what it is actually capable; and these peoples are consequently prevented from spontaneously developing their natural tendencies.

Again, this was an issue of consistency. 'Very sure I am', wrote Beesly in 1893, 'that no amount of material benefits would reconcile you and me to a foreign occupation of England; no, not if it was accompanied by a diminished income-tax, an eight-hour day, and a free supply of gas and water.'[177] Some socialists, as we will see later, would take a dramatically different view of this matter.

A second key justification for British imperial rule in particular – that it aimed to prepare 'representative institutions' – was also a key element in the civilisational argument, and is sometimes still cited in retrospective approval of British imperialism.[178] But this was also unavailable to British Positivists, who – though they were clearly as a group much more supportive of democracy than Comte had been – did not insist that parliamentary-style legislatures were even in principle adaptable to all climes. 'Self-government does not mean that the nation should rule itself in a particular way or by particular institutions,' Swinny stressed in 1907, 'but that it should rule itself in those ways and by those institutions which are most in accord with its national traditions and character.' He added a few years later that endowing 'the whole world with all the political and social devices of the West'

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[176] Ingram. *Practical Morals* (1904), pp. 129–30.
[177] *PR* (1908), 81; (1893), 44.   [178] E.g., Niall Ferguson. *Empire* (2004), p. xxii.

represented 'more or less forcible assimilation'. It might for instance be true, Ellis wrote in 1908, that the Egyptians at that moment were 'not fit for constitutional government', which appeared 'to be incompatible with a Theocratic system of religion such as Islam'. But that was 'no reason why they should not be allowed to make the experiment and find out its difficulties for themselves'. The moral was obvious: it was manifestly preferable to allow a people to make its own mistakes than to impose upon them an alien form of rule. For 'unduly prolonged foreign rule' was 'certain to paralyse by atrophy any power of initiative which the subject race may possess – to keep the pupil, in fact, in a permanent state of nonage'.[179] 'We Positivists', Swinny would similarly affirm in 1909,

have never been the slaves of constitutional forms, nor have we believed that Parliamentary government was the last word of political wisdom … If constitutional government – or even a Parliament – is found in the East, as it has been in the West, a useful instrument to assist the passage from foreign or domestic oppression, to avoid disorder in times of crisis and to conciliate sectional interests, the Turks and others are wise to avail themselves of it. Whatever in it is found alien to their civilisation can be abandoned when it has served its purpose; whatever is of permanent value can be retained.

But such a pronounced doctrine of non-interference on a civilisational basis did not mean that mutual assistance between nations was impossible. As Ellis put it in 1908,

If they ask our advice in order to put their finances straight, let us lend them a financial expert on condition that he is not to impose his views on them, but merely to advise. If they want to construct railways, or canals, or viaducts, or barrages (such as the stupendous dam across the Nile at Assouan), or other public works, let us place no obstacle in the way of their engaging British architects, engineers, and contractors for the purpose, on the distinct understanding that the persons so engaged are, in the event of any subsequent dispute with their employers, not to call on the British Government to support their claims.[180]

Respecting East Asia, some Positivists offered a fairly precise means of withdrawing from current exploitative relationships. Writing in the *Bee-Hive* in 1872, for instance, Henry Crompton proposed 'putting down that lawlessness on the part of the English, which has been so great a curse to China' by

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[179] *PR* (1907), 211; (1911), 295; (1908), 82; Ingram. *The Final Transition*, pp. 63–4.
[180] *PR* (1909), 27; Bridges. *Illustrations of Positivism*, p. 86; Henry Ellis. *Imperialism* (1908), p. 12.

Reversion to the Nankin treaty of 1842; – that means giving up the acquisitions of the last war – restriction, at all events for the present, of the trade to the five ports, that is, the giving up of the navigation of the Yang-tse river which has occasioned such terrible evils; abandonment of the right of ex-territoriality, some compromising of which would be satisfactory to the Chinese government. Lastly, the total suppression of the opium trade.[181]

To implement such policies, too, assistance might emanate from entirely new quarters. As the balance of power in East Asia began to shift, Positivists suggested means by which a newly powerful Japan might offset Western imperialism. Congreve wrote in 1879 that

If China and Japan could be kept in harmonious action via common resistance to European encroachment without any great commotions, the policy of Europe towards the East might become much more wise even before the adoption of such a system of international relations as that which we advocate. Asia could it gravitate towards unity might peacefully recover its just independence instead of being carved out by our encroaching power.

In one of his last letters, Congreve repeated the hope 'that Japan will throw in her lot with China, and that in such combination they will extort from the west the respect for China which Japan has already secured for herself'. And Japan's victory over Russia in 1905 was thus welcomed as a 'crushing defeat of imperialist ambition'.[182]

Ingram's third group, mainly Africa, constituted the greatest practical problem where withdrawal was concerned. For it was here that the 'native problem' – chiefly that there were natives who obstinately refused to either die or cede their lands without a fight – was greatest. This was primarily because, as Swinny indicated,

the 'uncivilised' race is held to be outside the comity of nations. What does this mean? It means that those peoples are deprived of the protection, such as it is, which the rules of war give to non-combatants, that their villages may be burnt to strike terror, their crops destroyed to force them into submission by starvation, and often that they will be punished for every lapse from that code of civilised warfare which their powerful antagonists themselves disregard.[183]

Beesly also offered a concise summary of the 'higher and more general principles', based on natural law and the theory of 'civilisation', used to deprive indigenous peoples of their lands. Here he confronted Vattel's position:

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[181] *Bee-Hive* (23 Mar. 1872), 2.   [182] Add. MS 45,262, f. 33; 45,263, f. 140; *PR* (1905), 224.
[183] In John M. Robertson *et al. Essays towards Peace* (1913), p. 84.

The Earth, it is said, as a whole is the heritage of the human race as a whole, and it is to be occupied in such a way as is most for the advantage of the human race. It cannot be admitted that large portions of it are to be left entirely or partially unexploited because they happen to be occupied by populations who do not make the most of them. Further, it is incontestable that we Westerns are the pioneers of civilisation. We have carried it to a degree far beyond the desires or conceptions of Asiatics and Africans. It is our duty to communicate it to them and, as they resist it, to impose it upon them. In pursuing this object we are no more to shrink from inflicting suffering on a generation or even several generations, than we shrink from the extraction of a tooth or the amputation of a limb in the case of an individual … This, I believe, is essentially the principle invoked to justify the slaughter and subjugation of black, brown, and yellow men by whites.

Beesly acknowledged, however, that Positivists, too, believed that the '*élite* of the human race' should 'work both for the utilisation of the whole planet and the improvement of the backward races, the latter being an indispensable condition of the former'. But he insisted that 'solidarity' was

not identity. It implies the mutual responsibility of societies functioning distinctly from one another; and this distinctness of function is no less essential to the idea of solidarity than is the mutual responsibility. There must be a convergence of effort; but there must also be a certain independence of life. To adjust these two opposite conditions is the chief problem of practical politics.[184]

From north to south British action in Africa was to the Positivists consistently malevolent. So, too, when it came to the issue of the conquest of the Ashanti in 1872, Congreve recognised the same paradox. 'Abstinence from pressure – nay even active interference to prevent pressure from others – an expedient and protective demeanour – such is our policy as Positivists', he asserted, if Africans were to be protected 'from Western and from Arab aggressiveness'. Respecting the Zulu War, Beesly wrote to Congreve in March 1879 that 'we have never been engaged in a more shameful and unprovoked aggression'. In southern Africa, Beesly thought, in 1881,

the greater part of the natives inhabit districts which have only recently been included in maps of the Transvaal and which have never yet been colonised by the Boers. Justice therefore would be satisfied by recognising the independence of the Boers in the Districts they really occupy, and forbidding them to encroach any further on the native tribes.[185]

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[184] *PR* (1896), 176–8.
[185] Add. MS 45,234, f. 24; 43,843, f. 96; Edward Beesly. *Some Public Aspects of Positivism* (1881), p. 32.

In 1885 the Positivist Society termed war in the Sudan, which produced Britain's greatest imperial martyr, Gordon, as well as the Mahdi, the nineteenth century's Osama Bin Laden, 'a policy of vengeance, prestige, and aggrandisement', adding that in 'a just cause we accept war, but we see no justice in the cause in which we are engaged'.[186] Early in the new century Harrison would condemn all the European nations involved in Africa:

One form of slavery is replaced by another – slave-raiding is carried on by deputy – massacres and burning of villages, rape, flogging, plunder, even cannibalism, go on beneath the flag of a European community. All the horrors which in the early part of the nineteenth century roused the people of Europe to suppress the Slave Trade, and to constitute it Piracy in International Law, are in full work in the twentieth century under the solemn guarantees of European diplomacy.

He also offered the most comprehensive account of how a policy of humanitarian contact might actually function, here respecting the Matabele and Ashanti peoples. He urged Europeans to be content 'with establishing trading posts at certain points of contact beyond which they would under no temptation or provocation attempt any occupation'. Missionaries might still ply their trade, but 'equipped very differently from their Christian prototypes. They would not revile the indigenous religions, for they would heartily respect them, recognising that the beliefs on which they are founded are true relatively to the intellectual stage reached by the population. Not having to save souls from hell fire they would be in no hurry to shake the established faith.' They might also 'begin by communicating the useful arts and the rudiments not of Christian theology but of real knowledge', and by such services 'would speedily obtain the confidence and respect of the natives and would be able gradually to wean them from the grosser and crueller usages connected with their religion and government'. Thus 'there would grow up in each area now occupied by barbarians a political and religious state resembling that of the West in all the essentials of civilisation, but with the differences suitable to historical antecedents and physical environment'. Positivism thus did 'not merely denounce the actual treatment of backward races by Europeans, but proposes an alternative policy, the superiority of which from all points of view is undeniable'.[187]

Such sensitivity to issues of racial distinctiveness showed how Positivists extended the humanitarian concerns of the anti-slavery movement. Amongst the first generation of Comte's followers, Congreve, Harrison

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[186] In a printed version of *Positivist Protest against the War in the Soudan* (Feb. 1885) (Add. MS 45,232, f. 287).
[187] *PR* (1903), 71; (1896), 180–2.

and Henry Crompton were all active in the Aborigines Protection Society; in the second, Swinny, a member of the Indian National Congress, took particular interest in race issues, representing the Positivists, for instance, in the 'Subject Races International Committee' at conferences in 1909 and 1911. One concern was what to do with admixtures of races and nationalities. Discussing this issue in 1907, for instance, Swinny asserted that the 'claim of every subject race of distinct nationality to the management of its own local affairs shall be recognised by the dominant power' only applied where 'the people occupies a defined territory', and was thus 'inapplicable to a race which finds itself scattered among its rulers', such as negroes in the United States. Another was the problem of recognising the priority of local custom, which brought some surprising conclusions, in one instance even to counselling the continuation of slavery. 'Philanthropic motives – the interests of civilisation, the crushing of slavery – we think all experience is against premature attempts to introduce our peculiar civilisation into the existence of tribes at a much lower stage', a complaint respecting Ugandan policy in 1892 put it, 'and for slavery – enough if Western Europe prevents all exportation of Africans, leaving it as a domestic institution to their own development'. Yet at the same time it was recognised that protection of native interests required a measure of interference:

We think this partitioning of Africa by the Western nations wholly wrong in principle – a violation of the obligations conferred by superior strength. *This moral objection supersedes all others. At each fresh step in the iniquitous process we reiterate our objections. Africa needed a Protectorate – but it was a joint Protectorate that it needed – the joint Protectorate of the West, to secure that most ill-used country from all further disturbance from without.*[188]

This implied a requirement of intervention under certain circumstances. Congreve, for instance, as we have seen, encouraged British action against Prussia, and summarised this aspect of the Positivist outlook on international relations: 'our foreign policy, as I conceive it, it is non-intervention in the internal affairs of any nation or aggregate of nations, – non-intervention for ourselves and the enforcement on others of the same policy by energetic action, if they seem disposed to violate it'. Harrison, too, contended that Britain should have intervened to support Denmark against Prussia in 1866. And from the mid-1870s onwards Beesly also warned that the only barrier to Prussian aggression against Britain was a *casus belli*.[189]

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[188] *Nationalities and Subject Races*, pp. 130–4, 175; *PR* (1907), 209; Add. MS 45,233, f. 109; 45,233, f. 109, p. 2.
[189] Harrison. *Obiter Scripta*, p. 177; *Bee-Hive* (23 Jan. 1875), 1.

'LITTLE ENGLAND' AND THE ANALYSIS OF EMPIRE

Positivists flaunted their anti-imperialist views openly, frequently showing a rare degree of moral courage in defiance of public opinion. In Liverpool, for instance, Henry Crompton's brother, Albert Crompton (1843–1908), was 'much interested in international questions, and particularly in the results of the contact between different races of men'. He posted 'a vigorous placard' in the city when conflict in the Transvaal loomed, warning 'that to fight the wars would be murder and the responsibility would be ours if we suffered this outrage on Humanity to be perpetrated in the name of England'. Positivist pronouncements on British international policy accordingly suffered a torrent of disapprobrium, beginning as early as the 1870s.[190] The original 'pro-Boer' constituency, the Positivists, Harrison lamented in 1900, had been 'abused as Little Englanders, unpatriotic, mean, poor-hearted, disloyal malcontents'. Such jingoistic accusations were difficult to parry, but the Positivists tried occasionally to invest the concept of 'Little England' with optimism and pride, and thus to promote an alternative conception of national character to that which was becoming increasingly predominant.[191] Beesly termed 'Little England ... the object, and the only rightful object, of our patriotic devotion', arguing in 1881:

Whether our empire is destined to go to pieces in a storm, or to be cut adrift in time by the good sense of the *new social strata*, our country will always remain to us. A new and better national life is in store for us. England for the English! Her soil shall not be monopolised by an idle aristocracy. Her money shall not be squandered, nor the lives of her sons thrown away in Afghanistan and South Africa. She shall not be handcuffed to Ireland. The wages of her workmen shall not be beaten down by the competition of Celtic peasants hunted out of their own island by exterminating landlords. Mistress of herself, free at last to attend to her own concerns, she will experience a revival of the patriotism and civic feeling which it is the special mission of Positivism to cultivate.[192]

'Little England' held no fears for Harrison, who thought that eventually 'England will have begun to grow its own food, and will cease to spin cotton

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[190] Sydney Style. *An Address Delivered at the Church of Humanity* (Liverpool, 1908), p. 26. As early as 1872 Congreve's lecture notes indicated 'Patriotism. (our attitude complained of)'; 'not Church, not Empire, nor Nation as now, much less any composite Nationality such as ours – Conflict of feelings inseparable from such hence attacks on us' (Add. MS 45,243, f. 96).

[191] *PR* (1900), 97. On the background to these developments see, e.g., Parry. *The Politics of Patriotism*, esp. pp. 246–50.

[192] *PR* (1896), 26; Beesly. 'Our Foreign and Irish Policy', 243.

and wool and smelt metals for the world.' '*We* are the true patriots, the real Englishmen,' he asserted in 1896:

I have neither love nor honour for the forests of Guiana nor the prairies of Uganda. England is my country; I for one am proud of it, and find its memories and its honours enough. I pity those who are not content with England . . . who do not care to call themselves Englishmen, who sneer at it as 'little England'.

For Quin, too, 'the true England will be that "little England" upon which the incapable charlatans of our later history have poured their ignorant contempt. This England will liberate itself in liberating the peoples whom it holds subject to a stifling predominance. Its greatness will be of mind and life.' And again in 1903 the *Positivist Review* insisted:

Our own position is clear. We are not 'Little Englanders,' we are 'Great Englanders'. England is our country . . . To sacrifice the well-being of our forty millions in a wild goose-chase after that barren title – that phrase – that hyperbole of the hour named 'Empire' – would be the suicide of the people of England.[193]

Yet such a vision of apparently retrogressive, insular 'greatness' defined by pre- and anti-imperial virtues was in this period increasingly difficult to popularise, and even a century later remains an awkward and embarrassing ideal (in its narrowly English version), often, if perhaps curiously, associated solely with extremist nationalism. The nineteenth century, and the slightly longer epoch of the 'Pax Britannica' (an ironic phrase, here), of course ended badly for both Positivism and humanity at large. The peculiar brand of Positivist internationalism promoted by Comte's British followers was eclipsed, paradoxically, just at the moment of its greatest relevance, when imperialism reached its most dizzying, destructive heights of popular enthusiasm, and the brutality of imperial conflicts was brought home, in the Boer War, to a nation more divided than it had been at any time since the French Revolution. And then, with even more disastrous results, came the slaughter in the trenches of France in 1914, where Positivists' sons, including Harrison's youngest, Gould's only boy, Julian, a volunteer, and Patrick Geddes's son Alasdair, fell side by side with millions of others. Here there must have been a peculiar poignancy in the 'Great' War to many Positivists, who had so long insisted upon applying the same rules to both 'civilised' and 'barbaric' states, and so long protested about the abuses of imperial rule, such as the use of martial law, the killing of prisoners of war and similar

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[193] Harrison Papers, 2/14, f. 17; *PR* (1896), p. 46; Quin. *The Politics of the Proletariat*, p. 69; *PR* (1903), 246.

violations of the rules of war.[194] For now the routine abandonment of such constraints in imperial wars was reimported back to Europe, with the mass killing of civilians, the taking of hostages, etc., meeting with public outrage and condemnation, their many imperial precedents being conveniently ignored. And this inherited memory remains, to a degree, our own: what is today the now-forgotten slaughter of Omdurman (1898) compared with the infamous sinking of the *Lusitania* (1915)?[195]

But the Positivists had not failed Humanity: humanity had failed the Positivists. A few impressive post-war efforts none the less maintained earlier initiatives. A classical scholar and school inspector, master of half a dozen languages, Francis Sydney Marvin (1863–1943), the Society's treasurer in its later years (until 1903, when he moved to Leeds), and one of its most important early twentieth-century lecturers, was a frequent contributor to the *Review*, and had a special interest in race relations. In the 'Unity Series' he published a sequence of volumes dedicated to international issues which were suffused with Positivist themes, and still took *International Policy* as a starting-point. Believing that the chief cause of the First World War had been 'a rejection of international law or arbitration', he insisted that its 'necessary issue is a reversal of this'. When the Positivists met with the League of Nations Society in 1920, he was its leading speaker.[196]

Positivist themes were also popularised in the post-war period by the sociologists Patrick Geddes (1854–1932) and Victor Branford (1864–1930), who increasingly portrayed Comte's vision as a realisable 'eutopia' which implied a revival of the ancient and Renaissance ideals of the city-state, and could be understood in terms of a new science of applied sociology, 'civics', which developed Positivist nationalism further in the direction of a theory of liberty and community.[197] Having found his 'spiritual home' in Paris as a youth, Geddes made contact with Positivists in the mid-1870s, becoming a

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[194] E.g., Frederic Harrison. *Martial Law. Six Letters to 'The Daily News'* (1867); Harrison. *The Industrial Republic*, p. 10.

[195] Fifteen thousand dead as against fifteen hundred. See 'A Song of Empire', by Romany Rye: 'To sink a Lusitania/Is "fiendish murdering"/But to slaughter babes by millions/Is a right and proper thing' (*The Socialist*, July 1915, 74).

[196] F. S. Marvin. 'The Unity of Humanity', in F. S. Marvin, ed., *The Unity of Western Civilization* (Oxford, 1915), p. 315; *PR* (1918), 261; (1920), 262–3.

[197] See Patrick Geddes. 'Civics: As Applied Sociology', in *Sociological Papers*, Part 1 (1905), pp. 101–18; Part 2 (1906), pp. 55–111. See also Mary E. Farmer. 'The Positivist Movement and the Development of English Sociology', *SR*, 15 (1967), 5–20. The ideal city-state theme is echoed in other contemporary discussions, e.g., *The Need of Nations: an International Parliament* (1907). Studies of Geddes include Amelia Defries. *The Interpreter Geddes* (1927); Philip Boardman. *Patrick Geddes* (Chapel Hill, 1944); Philip Mairet. *Pioneer of Sociology … Patrick Geddes* (1957); Paddy Kitchen. *A Most Unsettling Person … Patrick Geddes* (1975); Helen Meiler. *Patrick Geddes* (1990). None explores Geddes's theories of the city as a response to Positivist anti-imperialism.

member of the London society in 1884, and remaining friends with Bridges for many years. Like Gould, Geddes was on good terms with socialist leaders, was 'for many years dubbed "Socialist"', referred to as a 'known friend of the cause', and even hosted William Morris on an Edinburgh visit.[198] Like Harrison, and to a lesser degree Ingram, he cut his teeth on Ruskinian economics and, keen to promote the 'golden rule of sympathy and synergy' against the 'iron law of competition', sought to wed the two great prophets of the demise of *Manchestertum*, Comte and Ruskin.[199] He early expressed the view that the 'right sort of progress' was towards 'Carlyle's Industrial Captain and Regiment, yet living with a great deal more of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity than we see elsewhere'. As his attention shifted from botany to city planning he became involved in schemes for urban renewal in India and Palestine as well as Britain. He corresponded with Gandhi, commending the imitation of the revival of the Welsh and Irish languages. 'You would not be more pained than I am over our base imitation of the West,' was Gandhi's response. During the Boer War Geddes was scathing about the 'present world-wide wave of reactionary imperialism and nationalism', which had come to 'a head with the second Jubilee and in this atrocious war; it has now passed its climax, and will notably decline after peace is patched up, & the Coronation crackers are fired off, & the bills come in, with depressed trade to meet them'. In lecturing on 'Tropical Colonies and Dependencies of Europe' he noted that it could 'be broadly stated that the greater the sympathy of the rulers with native life, the more permanent will be the rule which they enforce', and thought it 'even possible that with complete affection for this subject, and respect for his tradition, the white man might establish a margin of benefit to the conquered as over the state of autonomy'.[200]

Geddes's most notable contribution to Positivist imperialist theory consisted of applying its principles to nations internally by explaining how great cities gained hegemony over their hinterlands, and in turn how 'predatory imperialism' might be counterbalanced by 'civism', defined as uniting 'the separate doctrines of regionalism and humanism' through making public duties applicable as personal responsibilities at the local level, the civic sentiment, in Geddes's terms, 'providing a good start for that of humanity'.

[198] Liveing. *A Nineteenth Century Teacher*, p. 1; Geddes Papers, NLS, MS 10515, f. 83; University of Strathclyde, 9/950; NLS, MS 10521, f. 23; 10522, f. 1; 10508, ff. 132, 186; 10528, f. 143; 10515, f. 109.
[199] Patrick Geddes. *John Ruskin, Economist* (1884), p. 13; Geddes. *An Analysis of the Principles of Economics* (1885), p. 36. A similar argument is promoted in Harrison's 'Unto This Last', *NC*, 37 (1895), 958–74.
[200] Patrick Geddes. *On the Conditions of the Progress of the Capitalist and of the Labourer* (Edinburgh, 1886), p. 13; Geddes Papers, NLS, MS 10515, ff. 98–9; Ingram Papers, D2808/27/20; Geddes Papers, NLS, MS. 10628, f. 103.

Here the work of the French sociologist Frédéric Le Play, whose own influences included Saint-Simon and Comte, was also crucial as providing a practical immediacy lacking in Comte, both together, however, requiring a further Scottish gloss to create the 'regionalist-humanist doctrine' of 'the beautification and ennobling of civic life'. 'Long experience has proved that the City, in its full completeness and extent of surrounding country, is the largest body politic which can exist without becoming oppressive,' Comte had written. Geddes envisioned 'the creation, city by city, region by region, of its Eutopia, each a place of effective health and well-being, even of glorious and in its way unprecedented beauty'. To Geddes, referring to Aristotle, the city was the focal point of much human experience. To 'civicise' modern life was to return to the central ideals of the *Politics* and to reject the hypostasised and deified 'state' of modern political philosophy. Rather than 'to International Federation in the ordinary sense', he wrote,

I look forward to inter-civic co-operation, to regional federation ... The greatest obstacle is the present over-centralised Imperialism of each metropolitan city. Each national budget is for feeding this overgrown centre at the expense of the provinces and minor cities, which etiolated accordingly indeed bled white ... This complex parasitism of the metropolis is now the essential physiology of the modern state ... The problem of peace and re-civilisation for Europe is to strengthen the regional life, and gradually, increasingly to liberate this from the present parasitic controls.

Geddes's project, then, was that 'the present exaggeration of nationalism and imperialism be at least notably mitigated, and the direct human relations ... advanced, by the incipient renewal of cities and citizenship'. This he proposed to accomplish principally by cultivating what he termed 'eutopia', or 'civics', meaning 'Town-planning and betterment of all kinds'. To this end he established a 'Civics Committee' in the Sociological Society. Geddes greatly praised the Swiss system of cantons in particular, where each locality met as 'sovereign states, each free to determine its own affairs', with much local government within them, the root of the Swiss democratic system being 'neighbours meeting in [the] open to discuss affairs and elect [their] own council'. The plan met with praise from Gustav Spiller, among others, who praised the 'fresh "city" reaction approaching ... where the small and the large, the near and the distant, are equally respected and regarded as a concrete and connected totality'.[201]

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[201] Victor Branford and Patrick Geddes. *The Coming Polity* (1917), pp. ix–x, 15, 56, 144, 163, 173; Geddes to August-Paul Edger, 22 Jan. 1929, MAC; Comte. *System*, vol. II, p. 251; Geddes. *Cities in Evolution* (1915), pp. 72–3; Geddes Papers, Univ. of Strathclyde, 9/872; NLS. MS. 10513, f. 30; 10514, f. 53; 10556, ff. 113, 200; 10618, f. 143; 10544, f. 107.

Victor Branford was that *rara avis*, a moralised capitalist, a student of Geddes who entered into banking and, amongst other enterprises, Paraguayan railway development, but who never shook off the enchantment of Geddes's Edinburgh lectures. He devoted much effort to advocating co-operative banking and state-organised credit (consulting John Hobson on these themes), even promoting the idea of 'Banking as Civic Service', and managing the Sociological Society as its honorary secretary. His own writings echoed Geddes's 'formative ideas' while taking up co-operation, garden cities and the idea of the 'ruralisation of the city'. Hostile to socialism, he none the less thought the First World War offered an opportunity for moving towards a system of production geared towards use more than profit, and utilising collectivist means to ensure greater social equality, with the state eventually becoming the sole source of credit. Branford followed Geddes in agreeing that a choice was necessary between 'rival traditions, imperial and regional', and that the 'centralizing movement which tends to Imperialism' had its counterbalance in enhancing regionalism.[202] Like Geddes, he was fascinated by the problem of how to make 'the concept of self-sacrifice in communitary service arise as a natural means of life-fulfilment', and with ascertaining the eutopian spatial formulae which would most encourage the civic or 'communitary sentiment'. This task focused chiefly upon the design and repair of cities, or providing 'the modern successor of the Renaissance Utopia', a process of the anti-centralising 'Resorption of Government', a 'progressive dissolution of centralised and external control, in proportion as we learn to devote ourselves to the noblest objects, and so to merit, to realise and to claim liberty'. A greater 'fulness of life' lay 'in a growing integration of Self with Family in the Home, then of Personality and Community developing together through a widening range of interest and expression from Neighbourhood, City and Region, outwards to Nation, Civilisation and beyond'. 'Politics', then, was to be taken 'in the literal Aristotelian sense' to mean 'City Development'. 'Aristo-democracy' Branford sometimes termed the model form of rule, but Switzerland was the model republic. (But to the question 'What city delivers the goods?' he answered 'Paris.')[203]

Despite such efforts Positivism was clearly in decline in the years after 1920. It may have still promoted a growing concern with the 'native problem'. One writer, at least, said of Comte's followers in 1931 that it was 'likely that their

[202] Victor Branford and Patrick Geddes. *Our Social Inheritance* (1919), p. xxvii; Branford Papers, VB13a, VB151, VB280; Branford. *Whitherward? Hell or Eutopia* (1921), pp. 73–4; Branford Papers, VB269, VB28, VB280, VB255.

[203] Branford Papers, VB280, VB28, VB284, VB280, VB20; Le Play Papers 68; Victor Branford. *Science and Sanctity* (1923), pp. xii, 117, 129, 247; Branford. *Interpretations and Forecasts* (1914), pp. 320, 295.

agitation did something toward cultivating the sense of responsibility that many Englishmen feel to-day toward the native races within the Empire'.[204] But though the last Positivist meeting was held in 1951, the movement in Britain did not survive its second generation of leaders. Identified too closely with France and Catholicism, indeed as 'little more than secularised Gallicism',[205] tainted by the suspicion of authoritarianism as well as its anti-suffragette pronouncements, perhaps not identified closely enough with socialism, it expired quietly, little noticed, with regular meetings ending in 1933. As a religion it had never succeeded. The 'Congrevian sect', Harrison thought, had driven off the educated members of the movement and left the rest being regarded as a 'serio-comic & obscure sect'. And 'worst of all', he sighed in 1907, the religion itself 'fails to stir the emotions'. As an ideology, it had lost the battle for public opinion at large a generation earlier. As Bridges wrote in 1894, 'Positivists will do well frankly to admit that for the present their hopes of seeing satisfactory relations established with foreign nations, civilized or barbarous, have received a very severe check.' So, too, in the same year, Beesly lamented the success of Seeley's *Expansion of England* in spreading 'the poison of Imperialism among the reading and educated public'. No Positivist ever came close enough to power to begin to offset such efforts, and the one man, John Morley, 'well known as an associate of the famous Positivist order of thinkers',[206] who ever achieved any great official post, proved a sad disappointment in power. As Secretary of State for India he was, Sir Henry Cotton recalled, 'as absolutely in the hands of the permanent officials of the India Office as his predecessors had been before him'.[207]

Two causes in particular for the failure of Positivism's internationalist vision were usually indicated. The first was Prussia's rising position in Europe. In 1881 Beesly asserted that 'the population of Europe is not

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[204] McGee. *A Crusade for Humanity*, p. 233.

[205] LPS Papers, 1/8; F. J. C. Hearnshaw, in Ingram Papers, D2808/E5. Even sympathisers portrayed Beesly, for instance, though unfairly, as 'un-English … affirming, as he does, the immense superiority of Frenchmen and French institutions over Englishmen and English institutions' (Davidson. *Eminent Radicals*, p. 173). Congreve conceded that the 'aversion to allow fair weight to Comte … connects itself avowedly with the initiative he assigns to France' (Congreve Papers. Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Lett. c. 182).

[206] Marvin Papers, c. 266, c. 260; Harrison Papers, 6/15; Bridges. *Illustrations of Positivism*, p. 373; *PR* (1894), 80; Justin McCarthy. *British Political Leaders* (1903), p. 131.

[207] Cotton. *Indian and Home Memories*, p. 304. Morley wrote of Comte that 'my whole idea of history is his' (F. W. Hirst. *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*, 2 vols., 1927, vol. I, p. 199), but his contempt for the Religion of Humanity led him to move away from Positivism. His assessment of Comte is reprinted in *Critical Miscellanies* (3 vols., 1886), vol. III, pp. 337–84. See also *Recollections*, vol. I, pp. 68–73, and his 'Comte', in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1946 edn, vol. VI, pp. 190–5). This concluded that 'no Utopia has ever yet been presented in a style so little calculated to stir the imagination, to warm the feelings, to soothe the insurgency of reason' (194), and did not mention Comte's anti-imperialism.

being militarised in spirit. It is not learning to delight in war or to be attracted to the profession of arms. On the contrary, it is becoming more industrial. There never was a time when dislike of military service was so strong and so universal.' But there was a vital exception to this rule: Germany, 'the only country in Europe where a purely military caste still survives'. Assessing the 'Causes of Modern Militarism' in the first issue of the *Positivist Review* in 1893, Beesly insisted that 'this discouraging retrogression' originated in Prussia's seizure of Alsace-Lorraine in 1870. Why then had Comte's predictions that a pacific industrial society was the characteristic form produced by modern social evolution failed in this instance? Beesly thought that there were two main reasons. Firstly, 'although industrial and warlike manners are naturally contrasted and opposed, yet the commercial branch of industry has often been tempted to seek expansion by resort to war. This was eminently the case in the last century.' Secondly, the consequence of

the separation of industrial direction from the general government of the country was that the chieftains of industry did not aspire to the political leadership to which they might and should have laid claim … therefore they did not contest the pretension of the old aristocratic and military class to retain the political direction in their own hands.[208]

After Prussia, then, there was the problem of increasing militarism and imperialism elsewhere. The United States, notably, about co-operation with which Harrison had written so prophetically in the late 1860s that 'the future of the world has so much to hope, from whose enmities it has so much to fear', was condemned by the late 1890s for 'the astounding rapidity' with which it had succumbed to 'the malady of imperialism'. Its annexation of Hawaii was described as 'modelled after a pattern with which we are only too familiar here. First a band of unscrupulous private adventurers, by a mixture of force and fraud, trample on the rights of the natives; then a ring of financiers at home enlist parliamentary support; and finally the Government steps in and legalises the conquest.'[209]

Then there was the influence of Social Darwinism, and 'the extreme rapidity' with which the *Origin of Species* had 'been applied to the solution of political and social problems', which Positivists also linked to Christianity's decline. The old radical constituency to which Positivism

[208] Beesly. 'Our Foreign and Irish Policy', 232; *PR* (1893), 33; (1894), 38, 41–2.
[209] Harrison. *The Political Function of the Working Classes*, p. 20; *PR* (1898), 152; (1897), 140. 'Sensational newspapers and Sunday-school philanthropy', asserted Bridges, caused the 'sudden explosion' (*Illustrations of Positivism*, p. 406).

could still appeal in the 1870s and early 1880s had seemingly disappeared by the mid-1890s, 'browbeaten by the apostles of brute force, who claim to have discovered a firm foundation for cupidity and violence in the Darwin doctrine of the survival of the fittest'. Now there was 'little to be hoped from the mouthpieces of Nonconformist conscience, or from the remaining disciples of Cobden who continue to preach his gospel of Free Trade but show very little of his fine enthusiasm for justice and humanity'.[210]

Beyond these causes fuelling militarism, however, it was also evident that the nature of imperial rule had itself altered in this period. In India, in particular, the gap between conquerors and conquered continued to expand. Writing in 1894, Beesly noted that the gulf was 'far wider now than it was thirty years ago … Even concubinage, which was common before the Mutiny and created a tie of a sort, is said, I know not with what truth, to have ceased, owing to the increased antipathy of the races. The estrangement is now complete.'[211]

But the moral high ground – even if, Masada-like, it was a last redoubt – had not been lost. Recognition in official circles may have been rare; the Duke of Argyll condescended in 1879 so far as to dismiss the 'small group of clever Englishmen who call themselves Positivists' who had 'lately been good enough to intimate that they disapprove of our Indian Empire'. But Comte's followers felt that where they had failed with the governing classes, they had succeeded with the workers. As Congreve wrote to Ingram in 1897,

we are looked on by the greater Englanders as a pernicious body. They cannot abide us. On the other hand there is a very considerable body adverse to this too prevalent tone which looks to us and to the judgments of the Socialists on the greater questions as they arise. The speaking out on them has been our policy from the beginning, the policy initiated on Comte's own suggestion by Gibraltar … [these efforts] are I am convinced watched carefully and have not been without influence. So if disliked by some we are accepted by others.[212]

Reviewing the progress of Positivist propaganda since 1866, too, Bridges noted in 1894 that on international issues, in 'all meetings of workmen, their views on these and the like questions met with enthusiastic response'. So, too, socialists acknowledged Positivist leadership in this area. In 1908, for instance, a letter to *Justice* commended the 'courage of the members of the Positivist Society in denouncing Imperialism when Imperialism alone was

[210] *PR* (1894), 24; (1895), 211.   [211] *PR* (1894), 98–9.
[212] Duke of Argyll. *The Eastern Question* (2 vols., 1879), vol. II, p. 216; Add. MS 45,233, f. 162.

popular, and in criticising and strongly condemning our recent policy in India'.[213]

The failure of religious Positivism did not therefore undermine either its popular or its analytical successes. Foremost amongst the latter, Positivism first fully developed from a hostile perspective the idea of commercial imperialism, and described in detail its sources, motives and consequences. At the most general and abstract level empire derived from commerce, not thus 'free trade', but a militarised commerce more akin to mercantilism. Conquest was hence designed to facilitate trade even if it was also driven by other ends. In 1885 the Positivists described British aggrandisement as a policy of 'irregular commercial conquest'. To Congreve, writing in 1898, empire was a 'purely competitive commercial interest … the command of the markets of the world, the extension of territory'. In the case of the Transvaal in 1899, Harrison blamed 'the organised agents of the speculators and buccaneers'. In Beesly's description, it was 'a few thousand traders, miners, adventurers, and filibusters, whom we have no power to control, of whose adventures we know nothing, for whose high-handed or buccaneering acts we ultimately have to answer' who had led Britain into being 'constantly dragged into difficulties and wars'.[214] Bridges termed the guilty Britain's 'plutocracy', while to Harrison

The 'boss', the 'gold-bug', the 'syndicate' were terms imported across the sea, and with the terms came the things. The press fell into the hands of the 'bosses', then 'society' fell; and soon the State itself began to be run by millionaires much as if it were a railway or a trust in the United States.[215]

As we have seen, the examples of India and then Egypt led to a narrower focus on financiers as the chief agents of imperial expansion. (But this echoed the view in official circles, too, for Cromer, as Harrison noted, also placed financial interests first in explaining Britain's occupation of Egypt.) By the 1890s this account was reinforced by Positivist economic analysis. 'Capital is getting more and more into the hands of banks,' Beesly noted in 1894, 'and the smaller banks themselves are being absorbed by bigger ones. At the same time we see the rate of interest everywhere falling, so that the non-worker finds it more and more difficult to live on his rents or dividends, and seems in a fair way towards ultimate extinction.' It was augmented further by the Boer War: when reviewing Hobson's *The War in South Africa*, Harrison agreed that it was international financiers who had

[213] *PR* (1894), 13; *Justice* (11 Jan. 1908), 5.
[214] LPC. *Report for the Year 1884* (1885), p. 10; Congreve. *Essays*, vol. III, p. 95; *PR* (1899), 157; (1896), 41.
[215] Bridges. *Illustrations of Positivism*, p. 243; *PR* (1900), 43–4.

commenced the war. Yet behind them, too, were other factors, such as 'over-production and over-population, the consequent demands for new markets and the pressure of extreme poverty'.[216]

Thus not only did Comte's prophecy that the development of industrialism would be a pacific process fail during the second half of the nineteenth century. The very force Comte reckoned on to provide financial expertise and leadership – the bankers – ironically became amongst the chief villains in his followers' later accounting of the role played by capitalism in imperialism. Clearly they had been insufficiently positivised.

While the 'bondholder' theory predominated at the time of the invasion of Egypt in 1882, and again in 1899–1902, we have seen that a much larger group was usually accused of both benefiting from and fomenting imperialism, including colonial administrative officials, diplomats, the military, professional civil servants and their supporters (Beesly added ex-Indian officials who became journalists). Behind these lay merchants and City financiers. But to describe imperialism narrowly as only driven by the latter would for the Positivists have missed an important element in the equation. Public opinion was also inflamed by the lust for power and tales of heroic glory which portrayed John Bull as the rightful conqueror of the world. And religion, overlapping with ethnicity, played a key role. Harrison stressed that 'the ministers and zealots of the Christian Churches' had 'vehemently stimulated the war passion' in most Victorian wars, while to Bridges, Britain's 'action in India, in China, in Japan, has always been tainted with the spirit of contemptuous dislike for a religion and a civilisation which was not our own'.[217]

CONCLUSION

'The Positivist school', Bridges once wrote, 'will be mainly judged by its power to handle difficult social and moral questions clearly and calmly.'[218] The greatest achievement of Comte's followers in international affairs was to offer a philosophic and religious groundwork for protecting small nations and indigenous peoples which was based not merely upon humanitarian considerations, which often affected toleration while insisting on the duty of 'civilised' nations to impose commerce and Christianity on 'barbaric' peoples, but upon a deeper respect for other cultures and peoples, rooted

[216] *PR* (1894), 48; (1900), p. 70; Add. MS 45,263, f. 140.
[217] Beesly. *Home Rule*, p. 5; Harrison. *The German Peril*, p. 93; John Henry Bridges. *Five Discourses on Positive Religion* (1882), pp. 38–9; Bridges. *Religion and Progress* (1879), p. 25.
[218] Marvin Papers, MS Eng. Lett. e. 106.

in a sense of the unity of the species. Given Comte's own reputation for admitting toleration 'only in indifferent and doubtful matters',[219] it is worth stressing this aspect of his inheritance amongst his British followers again. The Positivist opposition to imperialism emerged partly, as we have seen, from the decentralist, republican nature of Comte's thought. Its greater moral force in Britain doubtless stemmed from the Irish connections of many of Comte's followers. But it was also emphatically derived from the Religion of Humanity, without which it would have lacked a crucial basis of international sympathy. To dismiss the latter, thus, as 'just so much foolishness and dead weight'[220] as most existing accounts do, is to miss the point entirely. The Religion of Humanity was not marginal but absolutely integral to 'Positivist diplomacy'. 'We Positivists are particularly bound to deal with international questions', as Beesly put it in 1893, 'because we are members of a religious body which is destined to include men of all peoples, nations, and languages.' For, Harrison reiterated, in 'the religion of Humanity there are no distinctions of skin, or race, of sect or creed; all are our brothers and fellow-citizens of the world – children of the same great kith and kin. Whether they follow God or the Prophet, Christ or Buddha, Confucius or Moses, they are believers in a faith which we profoundly venerate; they are all sharers in the glorious roll of which we would perpetuate the muster.'[221] Noting that 'we have a national duty towards the Zulus, the Hindoos, the Chinese', Bridges added

what precisely is that duty? Here it is that the distinctive principle of Positivism comes in, the principle of Historical Growth, of Continuity. We recognise no great gulf between us and them, due to the fact that they do not accept certain articles of faith and that we do. We know that the life of Humanity arises from the working together of a long series of generations. The fetich-worshipping population of Africa represents one of the earlier stages, one through which we ourselves have passed . . . friendly sympathy and wise guidance might do much to help on the natural process of growth, and enable them to pass rapidly and without shock from their primitive condition to a level with ourselves.[222]

At the peak, perhaps, of its intellectual influence, in the mid-1880s, Positivism suddenly found itself confronted by, competing with and then ultimately utterly superseded by, a mass socialist movement. Its engagement with imperialism, to which we now turn, was also complex and controversial, and as it transpires also not a little indebted to Comte's advocates.

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[219] Hayek. *The Counter-Revolution of Science*, p. 184. [220] Bryson. 'Early English Positivists', 360.
[221] *PR* (1893), 45; Harrison. *National and Social Problems*, p. 254.
[222] Bridges. *Five Discourses*, pp. 38–41.

Socialism and empire: from Little England to socialist commonwealth, 1850–1920

INTRODUCTION

When we turn to the central section of this book, involving a movement which would eventually embrace thousands of persons, and whose impact on Britain's foreign and domestic policy is undisputed, various problems confront us. Not least is the fact that relatively little has been written on socialist attitudes towards empire in this period. As in other countries, socialism revived in the 1880s in Britain because of economic decline and growing domestic poverty. The working classes were not greatly concerned with international relations, and it was hard enough to sell them socialism as the antidote to their own problems. Consequently it has been commonly asserted that, as James Hinton has written, British socialism 'had little distinctive contribution to make to the formulation of foreign policy'. Contemporary sources also sometimes betray an occasional hint of this disinterest; a writer in the *Labour Leader* in 1897, for instance, reflected that 'few of the foreign questions which continually agitate England are really worth taking sides about'. Hence too we can note the singular omission of any treatment of colonial and imperial questions in an otherwise definitive statement of socialist intent published in 1897, *Forecasts of the Coming Century*, which included essays by George Bernard Shaw, Edward Carpenter, Tom Mann and William Morris. A decade later, in 1908, C. H. Norman, writing on 'Social Democracy and Foreign Policy', thought 'the reasons for this neglect are obvious', explaining that

One is the common assumption that Socialism is an economic problem pure and simple; a second is the difficulty of obtaining accurate information on questions of foreign policy; a third is the sparsity of democrats in the diplomatic service and the complete absence of Socialists who might be willing to enlighten the non-diplomatic Socialist on the problems of Socialism and foreign policy; a fourth is the obscurity of the principles of foreign policy and the tediousness of their study; a

fifth is the general lack of interest in the subject and a predisposition to leave foreign policy in the hands of orthodox experts.[1]

The discovery of exceptions to this premise of ignorance and neglect, however, begins to whet our appetite. A few memoirs detailing 'conversions' to socialism list disgust with foreign policy as an impetus for embracing the cause.[2] Fenner Brockway, who joined the Independent Labour Party in 1907, is a case in point. Born in India, he took Indian affairs as the subject of his first lecture once 'Socialism had become the passion of my life.' George Lansbury, too, who became leader of the Labour Party in 1931, began his involvement in public life in his early teens by opposing 'the Afghan wars, the Zulu, Kaffir, and other African wars'. He later recalled that 'Henry Fawcett, Charles Bradlaugh, and H. M. Hyndman roused in my mind a hearty detestation of British rule over civilized and uncivilized peoples.'[3] In several notable instances, such as Hyndman and Morris, as we will see, it was specifically a concern with foreign affairs which propelled individuals from radicalism towards socialism, rather than the reverse.[4] One Social Democratic Federation (SDF) member who charted such a course was H. H. Champion, who, Ernest Belfort Bax related, 'had been out in India, and, I believe, resigned his commission in consequence of his disapproval of the Egyptian War of 1882, commonly known as the "Bondholders War." This fact alone spoke for the man and rendered him sympathetic to Democrats and Radicals.' But we will also later encounter Champion proclaiming in 1892 that the empire possessed 'the makings of an irresistible force on the side of true freedom and progress'.[5] And such apparent changes of heart, we will see, were commoner than is often assumed.

We will see in this chapter that the period between 1880 and 1920 was marked by considerable socialist antagonism towards imperial expansion, which was, however, increasingly balanced by a desire to improve rather than dispense with Britain's possessions. The growing popularity of empire, particularly during the Boer War, brought a substantial number of socialists

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[1] James Hinton, *Protests and Visions* (1989), p. 33; *LL* (27 Mar. 1897), 2; *NA* (9 Sep. 1908), 362.

[2] E.g., Harry Quelch; see Quelch *et al. How I Became a Socialist* (1896), p. 73.

[3] Fenner Brockway. *Inside the Left* (1942), p. 23; George Lansbury. *My Quest for Peace* (1938), p. 15; Lansbury. *My Life* (1928), p. 4. Lansbury later hoped the empire would become a partnership 'which will enable both sides to be of mutual assistance and so add to the present commonwealth new States governed by the original peoples … We Socialists are the real Big Englanders, because we firmly believe in the Federation of the World' (Lansbury. *My England*, 1934, pp. 154–5).

[4] Hyndman first encountered Morris at a meeting concerning India, *c.*1879 (*Justice*, 10 Oct. 1896, 4).

[5] Ernest Belfort Bax. *Reminiscences and Reflections of a Mid and Late Victorian* (1918), p. 100; H. H. Champion. 'Protection as Labour Wants It', *NC*, 31 (June 1892), 1031.

either grudgingly to agree to shoulder the imperial burden, or downright positively to promote a socialist brand of imperialism, broadly conceived in terms of a co-operative commonwealth ideal rather than an exploitative capitalist model.[6] It is difficult to avoid the conclusion, perhaps, that the unpopularity of 'Little Englander' views in 1899–1900 in particular led many socialists to adopt a more pro-imperial stance, even if mass support in their ranks for traditional imperialism was lacking.[7] A few socialists, however, opposed such concepts vigorously, promoting instead a post-imperial conception of 'Little England' which was sometimes linked to schemes for internationalist government and the arbitration of conflict. Divisions amongst British socialists respecting empire thus approximately mirrored those in other European countries. What is more surprising, perhaps, as we will see, is that the numbers of those adopting a 'socialist-imperialist' strategy were considerably larger than the later mythology of a resolute socialist antagonism to empire has tended to suggest. This has been recognised as occurring most prominently amongst the Fabians, but in fact the trend was more widespread. We will then see in the following chapter that Hobson stood shoulder to shoulder in embracing this ideal with many of his colleagues on the left. Far more than for the Positivists, the Boer War represented a clear turning-point which made imperialism central to social-ist consciousness for the first time. Yet even then there was little agreement on the left as to a spectrum of conceptions about imperialism, or about what nomenclature was applicable, whether 'anti-imperialist', 'social-imperialist' or 'socialist-imperialist'. This terminology will have to be clarified if we are to make any headway in this field.

The existing secondary literature, however, sheds little light on the subject. Contemporary analyses of British socialism rarely discussed empire.[8] There is, perhaps, a broad if usually unsubstantiated presumption that socialists were anti-imperialist. 'Nearly all British Socialists passionately oppose the retention of India,' thought J. Ellis Barker in 1908, describing 'the vast majority' as 'unpatriotic, anti-national, and anti-Imperial'.[9]

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[6] See generally Andrew Porter. 'From Empire to Commonwealth of Nations', in Franz Bosbach and Hermann Hiery, eds., *Imperium/Empire/Reich* (Munich, 1999), pp. 167–78.

[7] As is argued by, for instance, James D. Young. *Socialism and the English Working Class* (Brighton, 1989), p. 42, who sees 'little popular support for the Boer War' (p. 40), a view generally upheld by Richard Price (*An Imperial War and the British Working Class*, 1972).

[8] E.g., Max Beer. *A History of British Socialism* (2 vols., 1929); William P. Maddox. *Foreign Relations in British Labour Politics ... 1900–1924* (Cambridge, Mass., 1934); Stanley Pierson. *British Socialists* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979); Pierson. *Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1973).

[9] J. Ellis Barker. *British Socialism* (1908), pp. 181, 174. But it has been argued that criticism of British policies in India did increase after 1906. See Moulton. 'British Radicals and India in the Early

'Socialists when they aspired to take the torch from the hands of the exhausted liberals, found it far from easy to define their attitude to the dependent empire,' wrote H. N. Brailsford in 1945 of the earlier period, adding that 'long before the time was ripe for facing these positive tasks, socialists were involved, rightly and inevitably, in a root and branch hostility towards imperialism'. In an explicitly Fabian publication, this is somewhat disingenuous; the Fabians, we will see, became prominent partly because of their *support* for the empire – albeit on their own terms. Later assessments, however, similarly assume that it was 'natural' that the socialists were vaguely anti-imperialist. John Plamenatz, for instance, wrote in 1960 that 'Socialism and hostility to empire usually go together.'[10] A study of the period after 1918 has highlighted Fabian pro-imperialism in the pre-war era, and balanced this against the ILP's opposition thereto, though without detailing its context.[11] But there is inconsistency even in some of the main commentators. A. P. Thornton, for example, in 1959 described the socialists as the 'sworn enemies' of imperialism. But in 1965 he denied that most socialists were 'separatists', writing that instead they 'believed, with Kipling, that a white man's burden existed, and that it had to be borne. In fact they were Gladstonian imperialists: a school denied existence by the orthodox.' He added, however, that 'Socialists were not in the least interested in bringing Africa or China or wherever within the fold of European civiliza-tion.'[12] Bernard Porter's most recent book asserts that 'left-leaning people in Britain believed that other world races deserved the blessings of "civiliza-tion" and "progress" as much as they did. That could be said to be "imperialistic" in itself,' while insisting that 'Socialism, in most of its contemporary guises, was almost unequivocally critical of imperialism.'[13]

Many of these accounts do agree in assuming that Hobson played a seminal role in forming socialist ideas. A typical view of socialist attitudes towards empire before the Boer War explains that 'imperialism as a coherent theoretical concept only emerged amongst the Continental Socialists in the early decades of the Twentieth century, whilst in Britain of course the most developed analysis came from the liberal

Twentieth Century'. The early histories of the movement similarly ignore the analysis of imperialism, e.g., Beer. *A History of British Socialism*, Joseph Clayton. *The Rise and Decline of Socialism in Great Britain* (1926).

[10] Rita Hinden, ed. *Fabian Colonial Essays* (1945), p. 21; Plamenatz. *On Alien Rule and Self-Government*, p. 130.

[11] Partha Sarathi Gupta. *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement, 1914–1964* (1975), pp. 10–11.

[12] Thornton. *The Imperial Idea*, pp. 48, 278; Thornton. *Doctrines of Imperialism* (1965), pp. 98, 211.

[13] Bernard Porter. *The Absent-Minded Imperialists* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 213, 217, Hyndman, Burns and Blatchford being the chief exceptions, with a 'minority' of Fabians included elsewhere. Porter treats the non-Fabian socialists briefly in *Critics*, pp. 97–104, and the Fabians in greater detail.

J. A. Hobson. Prior to that most European Marxists were struggling to develop an adequate analysis.'[14] Most surveys of Victorian imperialism typically start with Hobson.[15] Later descriptions of socialist views towards empire similarly often commence with Hobson.[16] Better informed than most, G. D. H. Cole said it was 'common knowledge that his book on *Imperialism* had a profound influence on Socialist thought'.[17] Yet the presumption that socialists commenced from a Hobsonian starting-point has also been emphatically rejected. A once-standard account suggested – here wrongly, as we will see – that

> The impact of Hobson on the thinking of British Fabians and Socialists is not evident in the first decade of the century. If it existed, it failed at any rate to give imperialism an important place in their political vocabulary. Protests against bellicose and alarmist views were made. They were directed against militarism or jingoism, never against imperialism.[18]

Victor Kiernan also wrote that 'Hobson's book made little impression on British socialists or Fabians, who had no objection to the empire in principle.'[19] Other historians, however, have proceeded more cautiously on this issue. E. P. Thompson, for example, wrote that 'the response of the S.D.F. to imperialism was contradictory; the response of the I.L.P. was evasive and ambiguous. The Fabian response was wholly unambiguous; indeed, at one time the Fabians were unabashed advocates of imperial "rationalisation".'[20] Historians of the Independent Labour Party, founded in 1893, have commented little on its views on foreign affairs.[21] Histories of the Labour Representation Committee (formed in 1900) and the subsequent Labour Party (founded in 1906, and gaining thirty seats in the general election that year), neither of which was of course a socialist organisation as such, rightly stress the diversity of strands 'sometimes antithetical to each other' within the movement, and the subsequent difficulties of

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[14] Martin Crick. *The History of the Social-Democratic Federation* (Keele, 1994), p. 158.

[15] E.g., C. G. Eldridge. *Victorian Imperialism* (1978), pp. 122–5; Hinden. *Empire and After*, pp. 87–93.

[16] E.g., Rita Hinden. *Socialists and the Empire* (1946); H. N. Brailsford. 'Socialists and the Empire', in Hinden. *Fabian Colonial Essays*, pp. 19–35.

[17] G. D. H. Cole. *A History of Socialist Thought*, vol. III, pt 1 (1963), pp. 192–3.

[18] Koebner and Schmidt. *Imperialism*, p. 262. Porter contends that 'Hobson's *Imperialism*, which also related imperialism to domestic economic and social issues, was not much read until its virtual rediscovery (and republication) in 1938' (*The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, p. 271).

[19] Victor Kiernan. *Marxism and Imperialism* (1974), p. 3.

[20] E. P. Thompson. *William Morris. Romantic to Revolutionary* (1977), p. 777.

[21] E.g., R. E. Dowse. *Left in the Centre: the Independent Labour Party 1893–1940* (1966), pp. 49–59. See also David Howell. *British Workers and the ILP 1888–1906* (Manchester, 1984), and George W. Shepherd. 'The Theory and Practice of Internationalism in the British Labour Party' (PhD thesis, University of London, 1951), pp. 25–79.

generalisation.[22] Yet we know that Labour candidates like Will Crook were perfectly happy to appeal to 'the greatness of our empire' (here, in 1903) in their election addresses. And the party sometimes stressed that workers strengthened 'the foundation of our empire' when buying colonial produce and sending British manufactures in return.[23]

If it is generally presumed that the left manifested a vague internationalism, historians have, however, also noted that two socialist groups, led by Hyndman and the Fabians, had at least intermittent pro- or 'social-imperial' tendencies. It is sometimes insinuated from this, albeit often on slender evidence, that a popular following existed for both pro- and anti-imperial trends, and that to deduce an anti-imperialist line generally amongst socialists as a result of Marx's writings would be mistaken.[24] Yet Kenneth Miller's *Socialism and Foreign Policy* (1967), which concentrates on the period after 1918, assumes the predominance of a Marxian analysis in both the Socialist League and SDF, and broadly adopts Semmel's view that working-class socialists were 'very much anti-imperialistic'. But, as Gareth Stedman Jones has stressed, we cannot identify 'socialist' views with the traditional working classes, at least in London.[25] Accurate generalisations, then, are hard to come by.

More recent specialist accounts offer somewhat greater assistance, however. Stephen Howe's survey of 'left' views of empire before 1914 acknowledges that 'themes conventionally associated with the name of J. A. Hobson' were 'the common currency of the socialist sects twenty years before'. He concludes, however, that the 'British socialist movement, unlike those of Germany, Austria, or Russia, did not develop an indigenous or distinctively socialist analysis of imperialism. At most there were fragmentary suggestive hints from William Morris and Belfort Bax.' The best study we have of the emergence of the idea of 'Greater Britain', by Duncan Bell, acknowledges that some socialists came to see the empire as a 'potentially beneficent force', but without detailing who and how. Nicholas Owen's *The British Left and India* offers a stimulating account of the development of some trends within socialism after 1900, notably in relation

[22] Rhiannon Vickers. *The Labour Party and the World Vol. I . . . 1900–51* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 16–53, here p. 49.

[23] George Haw. *From Workhouse to Westminster. The Life Story of Will Crooks, MP* (1909), p. 191; Conrad Noel. *The Labour Party* (1906), p. 147.

[24] So concludes Norman Etherington. 'Hyndman, the Social-Democratic Federation, and Imperialism', *HS*, 16 (1974), 102.

[25] Kenneth Miller. *Socialism and Foreign Policy . . . in Britain to 1931* (The Hague, 1967), pp. 20–9; Gareth Stedman Jones. *Languages of Class. Studies in English Working Class History 1832–1982* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 210.

to the Congress movement, but ignores most of the controversy prior to this as well as in the socialist press.[26]

Other studies have tried to ascertain more precisely when a socialist reckoning with empire first emerged. It has been confidently asserted, for example, that 'the socialist critique of imperialism' as rooted in 'the workings of an underconsumptionist capitalist home economy' was 'first presented by Belfort Bax in *Justice* in 1894', and then adopted by Hardie and others. The 'first socialist theory of capitalism imperialism' has also been identified with the American H. Gaylord Wilshire, who in 1900 described an interrelationship between surplus capital and the use of state power to advance trade and investment abroad. In this view Wilshire 'was the first socialist to conjecture that capitalists threatened by overproduction and a "surplus of capital" would resort to foreign investment, armaments and a bellicose foreign policy in order to delay the collapse of their system'. This claim needs to be measured against the assertion, assessed in chapter 1, that 'the first, rather crude attempt to expose the financial basis of Imperialism' was offered by Comte's followers in 1882, and the counter-argument promoted here, that the Positivist analysis had in fact become quite sophisticated by the early 1870s.[27] This has not been understood as linked to any *necessity* to export capital given a declining rate of profit. But, as we saw, the rudiments of such a theory were presented in Geddes's dissection of Indian finance in the early 1870s, which was in turn indebted to the political economy of the preceding generation. This, we will see, was to become a suggestive starting-point for socialist analyses by the early 1880s.

In part the fragmentary nature of the existing literature reflects the diversity of the socialist movement itself during this period. In reassessing socialist views of empire, we need to be wary in particular of imposing any preconceived ideological schema on a bewilderingly diverse cast of characters. To survey such a complex movement over such a lengthy period is itself to risk gross overgeneralisation. To treat later nineteenth- and early twentieth-century socialist organisations, or their press, as discrete entities with distinctive views and programmes is equally misleading. The ILP, for example, has been described as an 'umbrella party' whose 'curiously mixed membership of Christians and Atheists, Socialists, Anarchists and

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[26] Howe. *Anticolonialism*, pp. 28, 35; Bell. *The Idea of Greater Britain*, p. 267; Nicholas Owen. *The British Left and India* (Oxford, 2007).

[27] Douglas J. Newton. *British Labour, European Socialism, and the Struggle for Peace 1889–1914* (Oxford, 1985), p. 67; Etherington. *Theories of Imperialism*, p. 35; Taylor. *The Trouble-Makers*, p. 90.

Humanitarians' none the less 'stood fast for its internationalism'.[28] Many individuals participated in several groups or floated from one to another. The Irish socialist S. G. Hobson, for instance, was a member of the ILP and Fabian Society at the same time as belonging to socialist organisations 'with a Marxian bent'.[29] Non- or quasi-socialist influences were also constantly at work. There were Positivists in the SDF, notably F. J. Gould, who joined in 1907.[30] Many working-class activists also acknowledged a debt to Comte, including the land reformer Martin Boon, who specifically cited Harrison's ideas on international morality.[31] There was moreover a wide spectrum of disagreement within each organisation at any one time; even more than usual, the left was, in this period, a house divided against itself. And individuals altered their own views, sometimes substantially, across the long period we are considering. To impose a teleological ordering on a complex movement of this type, particularly one which privileges Marxism while deriding every other strand of socialism as heterodox or antediluvian, while once common, is no longer even remotely acceptable. Marxist scholarship has dominated this field, and produced a wealth of invaluable studies. But the procedure of awarding bonus points to long-dead writers on the basis of their proximity to the sacred canon of Marxist texts is sterile, and hampers our capacity to understand what actually happened. None the less we must commence with Marx, whose views were and remain vital to any understanding of the subject.

MARX AND HIS LEGACY

Though a serious British socialist reckoning with empire begins with Hyndman in the late 1870s, some twenty years after the Positivists had commenced their anti-imperial campaign, Marx had been in exile in London since 1849. It was, however, not until after his death in 1883 that his ideas came to be more widely known. Even then there is considerable controversy as to how far they actually influenced other socialists, never

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[28] John Paton. *Proletarian Pilgrimage* (1935), p. 246. Eric Hobsbawm describes the ILP as the chief heir of the Labour Church movement (*Primitive Rebels*, Manchester, 1959, p. 145).

[29] S. G. Hobson. *Pilgrim to the Left* (1938), p. 28.

[30] F. H. Hayward and E. M. White, eds. *The Last Years of a Great Educationist* (Bungay, 1942), p. 154. See David S. Nash. 'F. J. Gould and the Leicester Secular Society', *MH*, 16 (1991), 126–40.

[31] Martin Boon. *The Immortal History of South Africa* (2 vols., 1885), vol. II, p. 382. The tendency has otherwise been to associate the 'vogue of Positivism' with a crisis of 'middle-class conscience' (D. W. Crowley. 'The Origins of the Revolt of the British Labour Movement from Liberalism, 1875–1906', PhD thesis, University of London, 1952, p. 519).

mind the wider labour movement.[32] Marxian social and political analysis, and the broad outlines of the materialist conception of history as represented by the *Communist Manifesto*, were familiar to many socialists by the late 1880s. Hardly known at all were Marx's more specific pronouncements on the British empire. It is worth summarising these briefly here, however, in order to understand how Marx applied his own principles to British imperialism (a term he did not use).

Most of Marx's writing on the subject came in the form of newspaper articles commissioned after 1853, notably on India, domination of which by the British he regarded (in 1859) as aimed at 'securing the monopoly of the Indian market to the Manchester free-traders', a process he thought brought 'very considerable' profits and benefits to individual Britons, if nothing to the Treasury. Here, while Marx condemned the 'infinitely more intensive' misery inflicted by British rule on 'the Ireland of the East', he also praised the role Britain played as 'the unconscious tool of history' in undermining the village community, 'the solid foundation of Oriental despotism'.[33] Britain, he insisted, had 'to fulfil a double mission in India: one destructive, the other self regenerating – the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia'. India had no 'history at all, at least no known history', only 'the history of the successive conquerors who founded their empires on the passive basis of that unresisting and unchanging society'. The question was not, thus, 'whether the English had a right to conquer India, but whether we are to prefer India conquered by the Turk, by the Persian, by the Russian, to India conquered by the Briton'. While clearly opposed to colonial exploitation, Marx's starting-point, thus, was not anti-imperialist as such. To the contrary, he viewed imperialism as essentially a necessary stage in capitalist development, and as thus hastening the onward march of world history towards socialism. Under British rule India would industrialise, leading to the dissolution of the caste system and eventually 'the regeneration of that great and interesting country'.[34] Marx has, however, also been interpreted as seeing imperialism as a 'morbid excrescence on capitalism', in contrast to Lenin's view of it

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[32] See generally Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky. *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement* (1965), and more generally Anthony Brewer. *Marxist Theories of Imperialism* (1980). H. H. Champion thought that on the issue of the necessity for revolution Marx's influence had been 'infinitesimal', with one, unnamed, exception (*Common Sense*, 15 Sep. 1887, 67).

[33] Marx and Engels. *Collected Works*, vol. XVI (1979), p. 286; vol. XV (1986), p. 349; vol. XII, pp. 125, 132, 217–22; Karl Marx. *On Colonialism* (Moscow, 1968), p. 41. On Marx's views see Gareth Stedman Jones. 'Radicalism and the Extra-European World: the Case of Karl Marx', in Duncan Bell, ed., *Victorian Visions of Global Order* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 186–214.

[34] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. *The First Indian War of Independence 1857–1859* (1960), pp. 15, 20.

as 'an integral, inescapable part of capitalism'.[35] In addition, his Hegelian legacy and own cosmopolitanism early on led Marx disdainfully to dismiss the historical relevance of small nations generally, as not being in the vanguard of historical progress. This issue, we will see, would remain highly controversial long after his death.

The development of Marx and Engels's internationalism and cosmopolitanism in the 1840s is most closely associated with two texts, the *German Ideology* (1845–6) and the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848).[36] Prior to 1848 there is no doubt that Engels at least believed that in communist society both internal and external conflict would largely end. Standing armies would no longer be necessary – 'how could a communist society conceive of the idea of undertaking an aggressive war?' – although in defensive wars the superiority of a citizens' army would quickly become obvious. But the model rests essentially upon an economic rather than a moral basis. The 'original isolation of the separate nationalities' would be superseded by evolving modern productive forces, which would cement mutual needs and reciprocal interdependence, integrate nations into the stream of world history as a whole, and promote '*all-round* dependence'. Marx and Engels's position at this time thus combined a resolutely long-term anti-nationalist cosmopolitanism with a short- and intermediate-term proletarian internationalism. The working classes in their view not only shared a common interest, but were 'by their very nature, free from national prejudices and their whole disposition and movement is essentially humanitarian, anti-nationalist'. Thus only they could 'destroy nationality' and 'bring about the fraternisation between the different nations'. In June 1847, Engels asked rhetorically, 'Will nationalities continue to exist under communism?' The response: the 'nationalities of the peoples who join together according to the principle of community will be just as much compelled by this union to merge with one another and thereby supersede themselves as the various differences between estates and classes disappear through the superseding of their basis – private property'. The *Manifesto* then described how in 'proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an

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[35] Kiernan. *Marxism and Imperialism*, p. 194.
[36] See Solomon Bloom. *The World of Nations. A Study of the National Implications in the Work of Karl Marx* (New York, 1941), and Michael Löwy. *Fatherland or Mother Earth? Essays on the National Question* (1998), pp. 5–29.

end.'[37] Yet we note that there is scope for ambiguity here: in one account *nationalities* dissolve, in another it is national *antagonism* which disappears. The considerable distance between these views would eventuate in profound disagreements amongst socialists half a century later.

How should we then describe Marx and Engels's cosmopolitanism at this time? They not only rejected the 'hypocritical private-egotistical cosmopolitanism of free trade', but also alluded to the hidden chauvinism in many earlier types of cosmopolitanism. They also contended that any revolutionised Germany ought to renounce 'her entire past, especially as far as neighbouring nations are concerned. Together with her own freedom, she should have proclaimed the freedom of the nations hitherto suppressed by her.'[38] Yet this leaves several major questions unanswered. If no national type was to predominate in a post-nationalist, communist world, what would serve as a universal model? And, given Marx and Engels's antagonism to 'small nations', did such a question not imply geographical precedence for whatever nation and culture happened to predominate in any given region?

Doubtless the economic model of the world market which was the basis of Marx and Engels's thought included a painful cosmopolitan element at least as far as some, chiefly smaller, nations were concerned. Here we can also perceive an obvious conflict between the principle of national self-determination (which the First International adopted both under the influence of the romantic nationalism of Kossuth and Mazzini and tactically in support of proletarian revolution), and the centralising rationale and cosmopolitanism of the political-economic model. This was for Marx and Engels particularly the case respecting the Slavs. Excepting 'the Poles, the Russians, and at most the Turkish Slavs', they were harshly judgemental in asserting that 'no Slav people has a future'. Indeed any people '*forced* to attain the first stage of civilisation only by means of a foreign yoke' was 'not viable', and would 'never be able to achieve any kind of independence'. We note here that outside Europe such a cavalier generalisation might potentially apply to large numbers of newly conquered peoples. In Europe, if there was 'a question of the existence, of the free development of the resources of big nations', little 'sentimental consideration' would likely be extended to peoples like the Czechs, Moravians and Slovaks. The 'powerful progress of industry, trade, and communications' indicated that 'political centralisation has become a much more urgent need' than previously. Such

[37] Marx and Engels. *Collected Works*, vol. V (1976), pp. 50–2; vol. VI, pp. 6, 103, 290, 354, 488, 502–3.
[38] Ibid., vol. VI, pp. 3, 399, 411; vol. VII, pp. 92, 166.

small nationalities had hitherto played a role in world history only because the Germans and Magyars had integrated them into larger states. Now, however, 'these relics of a nation mercilessly trampled under foot in the course of history' had a tendency only to be counter-revolutionary. They would 'remain so until their complete extirpation or loss of their national character, just as their whole existence in general is itself a protest against a great historical revolution'.[39] We encounter here, then, scant sympathy for those squashed under the onward march of progress; indeed, about as little as imperialism was in this period actually extending to those 'backward races' it was busily exterminating in large parts of Africa and Asia. (Engels, too, wrote approvingly of the French conquest of the 'barbarian' Algerians as 'an important and fortunate fact for the progress of civilisation'.[40]) To a substantial degree, great power chauvinism and proletarian cosmopolitanism inevitably overlapped in this vision of the socialist future.[41]

But were there exceptions to this contempt for small nationalities? Ireland seems to present an outstandingly stubborn case. Some have seen Marx's view as being simply that 'the Irish were an oppressed nationality and were entitled to national independence'. Yet it has been acknowledged that Marx's ideas respecting Ireland, which some regard as more significant for his theory of nationalism than anything he wrote about continental Europe,[42] did in fact undergo alteration. In the 1840s and 1850s Marx hoped a British revolution would result in the 'liberation' of Ireland. By the 1860s, with Fenianism afoot, the formula was reversed, and he hoped an Irish revolution would overthrow British rule. But he still exhibited scant sympathy for parallel movements in India and China,[43] which he accounted unlikely to succeed, and remained sharply critical of leading continental nationalists like Kossuth and Mazzini. By 1867 he was describing the Irish issue as 'not simply a nationality question, but a question of land and existence'. Writing that previously he 'thought

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[39] Ibid., vol. VIII (1977), pp. 234, 366–8, 370–1. On these views see R. Rosdolsky. 'Friedrich Engels und das Problem der "Geschichtlosen Völker"', *Archiv für Sozial geschichte*, 4 (1964), 84–282, and Charles C. Herod. *The Nation in the History of Marxian Thought* (The Hague, 1976).

[40] Quoted in Bryan S. Turner. *Marx and the End of Orientalism* (1978), p. 5.

[41] But Horace Davis, for example, has argued that Marx and Engels's proletarian internationalism was based more upon a national than a cosmopolitan ideal. See his *Nationalism and Socialism* (New York, 1967), pp. 13–14, and against this view, e.g., Joseph Petrus. 'Marx and Engels on the National Question', *JP*, 33 (1971), 801–2; also Michael Löwy. 'Marxism and the National Question', in Robin Blackburn, ed., *Revolution and Class Struggle* (1977), p. 137.

[42] Sean Cronin. *Marx & the Irish Question* (Dublin, 1977), p. 5; Vladimir Claude Fisera and Gunter Minnerup. 'Marx, Engels and the National Question', in Eric Cahm and Vladimir Claude Fisera, eds., *Socialism and Nationalism* (2 vols., 1978), vol. I, p. 11.

[43] He called Britain's war with China in 1857 'a popular war for the maintenance of Chinese nationality, with all its over-bearing prejudice, stupidity, learned ignorance and pedantic barbarism if you like, but yet a popular war' (Marx and Engels. *Collected Works*, vol. XV, p. 282).

Ireland's separation from England impossible', he now saw it as 'inevitable, although after separation there may come *federation*'. Two years later he was quoted as saying in the International Working Men's Association (IWMA) that he 'considered the solution of the Irish question as the solution of the English, and the English as the solution of the European', now supposing that once Ireland 'is made its own legislator and ruler, once it becomes autonomous', Britain's aristocracy would be gravely threatened. In 1870 he urged the International to consider future relations with Ireland in terms of '*equal and free confederation if possible*', but '*complete separation* if need be'. It has also been suggested that Marx tended increasingly to stress that international fraternity existed chiefly between peoples rather than between classes.[44] In 1872 Engels was critical of English IWMA members seeking to 'sink national differences', contending that in 'a case like that of the Irish, true Internationalism must necessarily be based upon a distinctly national organisation; the Irish as well as other oppressed nationalities, could enter the Association only as equals with the members of the conquering nation'.[45]

If Marx's analysis was contingent on his assessment of the development of capitalism, and the triggering of an English by an Irish agrarian revolution, this exceptionalism does not appear inconsistent.[46] Yet Poland was also treated as an exception from 1848 onwards. 'Without an independent Poland there can be no independent and united Germany, no emancipation of Germany from the Russian domination that began with the first partition of Poland,' wrote Marx in 1863. In 1882, Engels, too, accounted Ireland and Poland as being two peoples 'ripe for independence', like Italy, Hungary and Germany in 1848. He wrote to Karl Kautsky that '*two* nations in Europe have not only the right but even the duty to be nationalistic before they become internationalistic: the Irish and the Poles. They are most internationalistic when they are genuinely nationalistic.' Yet 'countries inhabited by a native population', including India, Engels insisted to Kautsky in September 1882, '*must be taken over for the time being by the proletariat and led as rapidly as possible towards independence*'.[47] But again in 1888, Engels agreed that once 'Tsarism is overthrown ... Poland will come to life again; Little Russia [Ukraine] will be able to choose its political connections freely; the Romanians, Hungarians and Southern Slavs will be able to regulate their affairs and their border questions free from foreign

[44] Fisera and Minnerup. 'Marx, Engels and the National Question', p. 13.
[45] Marx and Engels. *Ireland and the Irish Question* (1971), pp. 57, 152–3, 251, 394, 255, 419.
[46] So argues Brewer. *Marxist Theories of Imperialism*, pp. 59–60.
[47] Marx and Engels. *Collected Works*, vol. XIX (1984), p. 296; Marx and Engels. *Ireland*, pp. 449–50; Karl Kautsky. *Socialism and Colonial Policy* (Belfast, 1975), p. 58.

interference'. These comments have been described as offering a 'striking contrast' to Engels's earlier view of 'historyless' peoples.[48] Do two such prominent 'exceptions' as Ireland and Poland, then, make a rule, or are these five groupings the rule? Clearly, at least, we see that Marx and Engels generally supported a principle of national self-determination *where this furthered the international revolutionary cause*, but not *as such*, unreservedly, and moreover usually in conjunction with federalist proposals, from 1848 onwards. But the principle that nationality where 'viable' constituted a claim for national independence lurks behind many of these discussions. This has the effect of giving Marx and Engels's treatment of nationalism a complexity, if not confusion, which would be inherited by later generations of followers.[49] In fact it appears that the more extreme cosmopolitanism evident in some statements of the later 1840s had always co-existed with the acknowledgement of the legitimacy of various nationalist aspirations. The latter view, however, remained insufficiently theorised; hence the frequent complaint that Marx 'systematically underestimated' the force of nineteenth-century European nationalism.[50]

The First International (1864–72) gave Marx the opportunity to present his views to a somewhat wider audience.[51] His inaugural address proposed that the organisation aim 'to vindicate the simple laws of morals and justice, which ought to govern the relations of private individuals, as the rules paramount of the intercourse of nations'. Marx's general message respecting foreign affairs, observers noted, was captured in the phrase 'to master the mysteries of international politics, to watch the diplomatic acts of their respective governments, to counteract them, if necessary, by all the means in their power'.[52] Support for continental nationalist movements by the British working classes after 1848 has been well documented.[53] But the

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[48] Ian Cummins. *Marx, Engels and National Movements* (1980), pp. 104, 161. But Löwy views Marx's writing on Poland as essentially anti-Russian rather than supportive of any principle of national self-determination, while regarding the 'writings on Ireland' as having 'a far wider application' and stating 'implicitly, some general principles on the question of oppressed nations' ('Marxism', pp. 137–8).

[49] Hence a study of several Irish and Scottish nationalists concludes that the 'status of "the nation" within Marx's argument remains obscure' (David Howell. *A Lost Left*, Manchester, 1986, p. 9).

[50] Isaiah Berlin. *Karl Marx* (Oxford, 1948), p. 30.

[51] The standard source is Collins and Abramsky. *Karl Marx*; see also Kirk Willis. 'The Introduction and Critical Reception of Marxist Thought in Britain, 1850–1900', *HJ*, 20 (1977), 417–59. For the British side see Henry Collins. 'The English Branches of the First International', in Asa Briggs and John Saville, eds., *Essays in Labour History* (1960), pp. 242–74. See also David Felix. 'The Dialectic of the First International and Nationalism', *RP*, 45 (1983), 20–44.

[52] *Documents of the First International*, p. 287; H. W. Lee. *Social-Democracy in Britain* (1935), p. 37.

[53] See, e.g., Margot Finn. *After Chartism. Class and Nation in English Radical Politics, 1848–1874* (Cambridge, 1993), and Christine Lattek. *Revolutionary Refugees. German Socialism in Britain, 1840–1860* (2006).

IWMA rarely took up non-European issues.[54] Its English adherents were mainly concerned with electoral and land reform, and socialism chiefly of the O'Brienite variety.[55] Respecting future forms of government, federative ideas circulated; an English member proposed in 1872 that 'England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the Colonies and Possessions each shall have a local House of Representatives in addition to being represented in the Federal Parliament.'[56] It might be said, then, that there was here a localist, federative counterweight to Marx and Engels's tendency towards cosmopolitan centralism. And Marx and Engels's own later writings on the Paris Commune in particular indicate that they moved in this direction themselves, if not yet extending the principle further afield in nationalist terms as a matter of principle.

The years of the Second International (1889–1914) tell a rather different story.[57] As European empires expanded rapidly, radicals and socialists were increasingly pressed to assess what this implied for their own domestic programmes. At successive meetings of the International the 'colonial question' surfaced ever more frequently, and divisions emerged which will prove of interest when we come to examine British controversies in detail. In 1896, meeting in London, socialists broadly embraced an ideal of national self-determination, and the French encouraged a discussion of colonial policy.[58] When it assembled at Paris in 1900 the International briefly avowed its condemnation of capitalist colonialism in principle.[59] More important was its Amsterdam meeting in August 1904, when a resolution introduced by the president, a former Dutch East Indies engineer, Henri van Kol, condemned colonial expansion, but did not consider it 'necessarily bad for a country to be colonized in any circumstances', and abjured withdrawal as such.[60] None the less when the veteran Indian nationalist

[54] E. S. Beesly. 'The International Working Men's Association', *FR*, 14 (1870), 517–35; George Howell. 'The History of the International Association', *NC*, 4 (1878), 19–39.

[55] Collins. 'The English Branches of the First International', pp. 242–74; Mark Bevir. 'The British Social Democratic Federation 1880–1885', *IRSH*, 36 (1992), 207–29, gives greater prominence to the O'Brienite legacy.

[56] Harrison. *The English Defence of the Commune*, p. 281.

[57] The debates of this period are analysed in Preben Kaarsholm. 'The South African War and the Response of the International Socialist Community to Imperialism between 1896 and 1908', in Fritz van Holthoon and Marcel van der Linden, eds., *Internationalism in the Labour Movement* (2 vols., Leiden, 1988), vol. I, pp. 42–67. Lenin's 'The Right of Nations to Self-Determination', *Collected Works*, vol. XX (Moscow, 1964), pp. 393–454, opposed 'nationalism' as an adjunct to bourgeois hegemony, but supported the 'right of self-determination' or 'secession' in principle for all nations (p. 434).

[58] *Agenda for the International Socialist Workers and Trades Union Congress, 1896* (1896), p. 11.

[59] IISG, Second International Collection, 130.

[60] *Social-Democrat* (Nov. 1900), 341; Julius Braunthal. *History of the International 1864–1914* (1966), pp. 310–11. See generally Newton. *British Labour, European Socialism*, esp. pp. 52–69.

Dadabhai Naoroji strode towards the podium to speak, the thousand participants 'stood silently and uncovered before him', in what was described as 'a wonderful and most inspiring manifestation'. But his plea too was moderate. Condemning the 'Imperialism of brute force' as 'barbarism', Naoroji contended for an 'Imperialism of civilisation', 'the Imperialism of equal rights, equal duties, and equal freedoms'. 'The remedy', he insisted, 'was to give India self-government. She should be treated like the other British colonies. The Indians would maintain their connection with England, but they resented being treated as slaves.'[61]

At this meeting a resolution proposed by the British delegates, and evidently framed by S. G. Hobson and unanimously approved, stated that 'Congress recognizes the right of the inhabitants of civilized countries to settle in lands where the population is at a lower stage of development.' It did condemn 'the existing capitalist system of colonial rule', and supported a 'practicable system of self-government for the Indian people under English sovereignty'.[62] But the Congress also affirmed that the 'new wants which will make themselves felt after the victory of the workers and from the moment of their enfranchisement, will render the possession of colonies still necessary even under the socialist government of the future'. It added that as 'capitalism is an inevitable stage of the economical evolution which the colonies will have to go through, it will be found necessary to permit the development of industrial capitalism even, when sacrificing – if need be – the ancient forms of property (communal or feudal)'.[63] And as always there was the additional tension of international labour competition: a resolution signed by Morris Hillquit warned of the influence of 'the Chinese, the Negros, etc.' on falling wages, and urged socialist resistance to the trend.[64]

In a subsequent debate at the Stuttgart Congress of August 1907, van Kol again insisted, quoting Auguste Bebel for support, that socialists could promote a positive view of empire which combined improving native life with developing natural resources. The Congress again indicated that 'colonial policy . . . under a socialist regime may become a work of civilization'.[65] Some German Social Democrats did 'not reject all colonial policies in all circumstances, such as those which, under a socialist régime, could serve a civilizing purpose'. The majority, however, led by Karl

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[61] IISG, Second International Collection, 421.
[62] Braunthal. *History of the International*, p. 312; *Resolutions of the International Socialist Congress, Amsterdam, 1904* (Bruxelles, 1904), 45–7, has 'British paramountcy'. Hobson's manuscript corrections are on the draft proposal (IISG, Second International Collection, 403).
[63] *Resolutions of the International Socialist Congress*, pp. 45–7.
[64] IISG, Second International Collection, 408.   [65] IISG, Second International Collection, 434.

Kautsky, regarded a socialist colonial policy as self-contradictory, foreign rule being antithetical to the fundamental socialist doctrine of the right of every nation to freedom and independence.[66] Eduard Bernstein, however, backed van Kol, having in his book *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus* (1899) previously justified colonialism on the basis of a right of tropical exploitation:

if it is not reprehensible to enjoy the produce of tropical plantations, it cannot be so to cultivate such plantations ourselves ... only a conditional right of savages to the land occupied by them can be recognised. The higher civilisation ultimately can claim a higher right. Not the conquest, but the cultivation, of the land gives the historical legal title to its use.[67]

Bernstein supported the latter view by quoting Marx's *Das Kapital* – an interpretation Kautsky disputed – to the effect that 'a whole society, a nation, nay, all contemporaneous societies taken together are not proprietors of the earth. They are only its tenants, its usufructuaries, and have to leave it improved as *boni patres familias* to the following generation.'[68] Eduard David more pointedly asked the Congress to affirm that 'Socialism needs the productive powers of the entire world, which are destined to be placed at the service of humanity, and to raise the peoples of all colours and languages to the highest culture.' The colonial idea was thus here 'an integral element in the universal aims of civilisation which the Socialist movement pursues'.[69] We will reconsider this argument when we reach J. A. Hobson.[70] But it is immediately clear that we are here confronted with the legacy of Vattel in socialist guise.

HYNDMAN AND THE SDF

We commence our assessment of the leading British socialists with a controversial figure – but only one amongst many, as we will see. The son

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[66] Braunthal. *History of the International*, p. 319; Cole. *A History of Socialist Thought*, p. 70. The episode is discussed at length in Kautsky. *Socialism and Colonial Policy*, introduction.

[67] Eduard Bernstein. *Evolutionary Socialism* (New York, 1961), pp. 178–9. As early as 1896 he contended that 'we recognise no right of robbery, no right of hunters against cultivators' in cases where African nomadic peoples made a living 'by raiding their more civilised neighbours', concluding that savages could be 'made to conform to the rules of a higher civilisation' (quoted in H. and J. M. Tudor, eds. *Marxism and Social Democracy*, Cambridge, 1988, p. 52).

[68] Kautsky. *Socialism and Colonial Policy*, p. 13. See Marx. *Capital*, vol. III, pt 6, ch. 46. The passage begins: 'From the standpoint of a higher economic form of society, private ownership of the globe will appear quite as absurd as private ownership of one man by another.'

[69] Cole. *A History of Socialist Thought*, p. 71.

[70] J. A. Hobson was certainly acquainted with Bernstein's arguments. See also the attack on Bernstein in *Justice* (14 Dec. 1907), 1.

of a wealthy stockbroker, perhaps a paradigmatic champagne socialist, Henry Mayers Hyndman (1842–1921) had an imperial background in his family, both in the East and West Indies; at the turn of the century he had mining investments in the Gold Coast. Never seen in public without a frock coat and top hat, even when selling socialist papers in the Strand, Hyndman regarded himself as the foremost of Marx's interpreters in Britain.[71] He had admirers amongst his contemporaries; George Bernard Shaw called him 'the most far-seeing, the most sensible, the most level-headed of men'. None the less he has been ridiculed and marginalised in histories of the movement largely because of his fractious relationship with Engels, his apparent unwillingness to acknowledge his intellectual debts to Marx, and generally un-Marxian heterodoxy, and his later warning that the Bolsheviks would bring 'ruin to Russia'.[72] To muddy the waters still further, he also achieved a reputation as a nationalist and even militarist, possessing (in Eric Hobsbawm's words) 'a consistent strain of jingoist, anti-German – indeed racialist-imperialism, which owed nothing to any British left-wing tradition'.[73] The available collective portrait of him in consequence is, to say the least, confusing. William Morris termed Hyndman 'rather a jingo than anything else' and moving 'ultimately towards Tory Democracy', in 1881.[74] Engels in 1884 said he was a 'pretty unscrupulous careerist' who combined 'internationalist phraseology with jingoist aspirations'. Eleanor Marx, too, insisted to Wilhelm Liebknecht that Hyndman 'whenever he could do so with impunity, has endeavoured to set English workmen against "foreigners"'.[75] Robin Page Arnot demonised him as the 'evil genius of the socialist movement'. Cole dismissed him as 'not an original thinker', who 'added nothing of substance to what he had learnt from Marx'.[76] One later historian condemned his 'deplorable' nationalism, and asserted that Hyndman was a 'Tory at heart' who 'retained, all his life, a hatred of liberalism and a certain belief in Britain's imperial mission'. Another described him as 'a self-satisfied, garrulous individual, who had grafted a

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[71] E.g., H. M. Hyndman. *The Evolution of Revolution* (1920), p. 7. See generally Chushichi Tsuzuki. *H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism* (Oxford, 1961), Frederick J. Gould. *Hyndman Prophet of Socialism* (1928), and Mark Bevir. 'H. M. Hyndman: a Rereading and a Reassessment', *HPT*, 12 (1991), 125–45.

[72] Shaw Papers, Add. MS 50538, f. 104 (22 June 1888); *Justice* (9 Jan. 1919), 1. Hyndman's relations with Marx and Engels are re-examined in Keith Laybourn and Dylan Murphy. *Under the Red Flag. A History of Communism in Britain, c.1849–1991* (Stroud, 1999), pp. 4–15.

[73] Eric Hobsbawm. *Labouring Men* (1964), p. 234.

[74] Morris, *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, vol. II, p. 371.

[75] Quoted in Yvonne Kapp. *Eleanor Marx* (2 vols., 1972), vol. II, pp. 55, 59; vol. I, p. 211.

[76] R. P. Arnot. *William Morris: a Vindication* (1934), p. 6; Cole. *A History of Socialist Thought*, vol. II: *Marxism and Anarchism 1850–1891* (1954), p. 410.

few socialist ideas on to his essentially conservative outlook'. To one liberal commentator he was 'violently nationalist'. Many lean towards the opinion that he was an 'autocrat' in the SDF.[77]

Some of these views stem from stressing Hyndman's political and intellectual starting-points. By his own admission he commenced his career as 'an Imperialist' who upheld 'the glories of British rule all over the world, considering, indeed, that our expansion was good alike for governors and governed'. An 'out-and-out Radical' in domestic affairs, Hyndman's outlook on foreign policy in the late 1870s consisted of a Russophobic pro-imperialist stance close to Toryism, and hostile to Gladstone's anti-expansionist policies. Some have concluded that he consequently embraced socialism as 'the best way of preserving Britain's world pre-eminence', in other words, that an imperial outlook underpinned his thought in general.[78] Yet Hyndman sympathised early on with the Italian independence movement, later recalling the 'unquenchable fire' of Mazzini and 'chivalrous exploits' of Garibaldi. He later claimed to have supported 'the federation of the free Colonies with the Mother-Country on a thorough-going democratic basis' as early as 1868.[79] Hyndman's strongly pro-Turkish and anti-Russian stance brought him into contact with Conservative leaders.[80] He contributed to Frederick Greenwood's *Pall Mall Gazette* from 1871 onwards, telling Greenwood it was 'a splendid notion' for the government to purchase the Khedive's Suez Canal shares when Disraeli first mooted the scheme to Lord Derby in 1875.[81] The only serious study of Hyndman, by Chushichi Tsuzuki, describes him as 'a keen advocate of imperial power – keener even than Disraeli', although he deplored Henry M. Stanley's apparent massacre of Africans during his explorations. When he began almost by accident to study Indian affairs in detail, he came quickly to believe that Indian famines were caused by a 'drain' of wealth to Britain. But this did not for Tsuzuki make him 'any the less of an imperialist', for Hyndman called for a 'true imperial policy . . . to knit together the various

[77] W. Kendall. *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900–21* (1969), pp. 48, 4; Raymond Challinor. *The Origins of British Bolshevism* (1977), p. 14; Gilbert Murray. *The Ordeal of this Generation* (1929), p. 68; Robert Barltrop. *The Monument. The Story of the Socialist Party of Great Britain* (1975), p. 6.

[78] Hyndman. *Further Reminiscences*, p. 151; Hyndman. *Record*, p. 51; Andrew Thorpe. *A History of the British Labour Party* (1997), p. 9.

[79] Hyndman. *Record*, pp. 31–2, 97; Hyndman. *Socialism and the Fiscal Question* (1900), p. 4; *Justice* (13 Apr. 1907), 6.

[80] He would later happily acknowledge his debt 'towards the old Tory leaders for what they endeavoured to do for me' (Maxse Papers, 458), and elsewhere noted that he had been in 'almost daily communication with Sir Louis Mallet at the India Office' and 'my intimate friend Mr Edward Stanhope, Under-Secretary for India' in 1878 (Hyndman. *The Emancipation of India*, 1911, p. 3).

[81] Gould. *Hyndman*, p. 43.

communities under our flag, and to exercise far and wide that continuous influence in favour of the principles that have made the greatness of this country – justice, freedom, and respect for each one's rights'. Though he had internationalist leanings, for Tsuzuki 'the "national", if not "nationalist", aspects of his personal creed' often 'reasserted themselves', though this also made him a 'champion of nationalism wherever he saw it asserting itself against foreign domination'. Hyndman himself happily admitted that his general idea of foreign policy early on involved having Britain 'at the head of all the democracies & small powers of Europe'. Pierson calls his attitudes towards empire 'somewhat ambivalent'. Crick describes them as commencing in the late 1870s with 'the idea of a liberal empire, a close union of "democratic colonies", which he would later translate into a "Socialist commonwealth" led by Britain and setting an example to the rest of the world'. Another recent study emphasises that, underpinned by a 'Tory moralism … a patriotism verging on chauvinism dominated Hyndman's ethic'.[82] And Hyndman not only stood as a Tory candidate for Marylebone in 1880, when he opposed disestablishment and Irish Home Rule, termed his proposals respecting India merely 'a policy of retrenchment and reorganisation', and described 'our free-governed Colonies' as 'the special heritage of our working classes'.[83] He also took 'Tory gold' to put up two socialist candidates in the 1885 general election, with the aim of splitting the Liberal vote, to the horror of many of his socialist associates.

Yet virtually all commentators note that Hyndman became the most vehement critic of British policy in India, enjoying unparalleled prominence in this role for nearly half a century. In the early 1860s, Hyndman later recalled, he had been convinced 'that British rule in India was beneficial to its peoples' and 'that the suppression of the Mutiny, though disfigured by hideous English crimes, was on the whole justifiable'. But then Hyndman's 'attention was first called to the seamy side of our rule in India by reading the pamphlet of the well-known Positivist, James Geddes, the hero of the Orissa Famine, published in 1871, entitled "The Logic of Indian Deficit"'.[84] Initially Geddes's evidence 'failed to shake my belief in the beneficence of our rule'. On a second reading, however, following both the prominent Positivist defence of the Commune and the dreadful famines

[82] Pierson. *British Socialists*, p. 40; Crick. *The History of the SDF*, p. 23; Bevir. 'Hyndman', 136.
[83] BLPES, Coll. Misc. 706/4; also reprinted in Lee. *Social-Democracy*, pp. 275–6.
[84] Hyndman. *Record*, p. 167; R. T. Hyndman. *The Last Years of H. M. Hyndman* (1923), p. 312. Hyndman would later call attention to Congreve's 1857 pamphlet on India as having demonstrated that 'what they were doing in reconquering India was a curse to India and to themselves' (*The Unrest in India*, 1907, p. 7; *Justice*, 18 May 1907, 3).

of 1876–9, Hyndman concluded that the increasing severity of Indian famines had indeed resulted from 'the defects of our administration'.[85] He now challenged 'the assumption that the people under British rule were much better off in every way than under native rule'. Hyndman published *The Nizam of Hyderabad. Indian Policy and English Justice* (1875) and *The Indian Famine and the Crisis in India* (1877). Statistical support he gleaned from Dadabhai Naoroji.[86] 'The Bankruptcy of India' (*The Nineteenth Century*, October 1878) followed, which concluded 'that Indian society, as a whole, has been frightfully impoverished under our rule, and that the process is going on now at an increasingly rapid rate'. The 'drain' theory would remain a Hyndman trademark for the rest of his life, and was widely accepted by the labour press. *The Times* promptly condemned the 'alarming article'. Hyndman backed down slightly, replying that he believed 'there has been no such good administration in India since the days of Akbar as there was in some of the "non-regulation" districts under the Company. It is to this form of government, with necessary modifications, that I desire to see us return as far as possible.'[87] The government's response was to send his chief critic in the paper, Sir George Campbell, to preside over the Famine Commission. But Hyndman now, as he wrote in 1911, formulated

a definite policy in regard to India and Asia generally, which called for the re-establishment of genuine Indian rule throughout Hindustan, under light English leadership, the terrible drain of produce without commercial return being stanched. Thus India from then onwards would, as I believed, have gained steadily in wealth and have become, on friendly terms with us, one of the finest Empires the world has ever seen. That, I say, was my belief then, that is still my conviction now.[88]

'Light English leadership', we should note, was not 'independence', but could be described as capable of promoting an independence strategy through gradual development.

By 1884, Hyndman unflinchingly condemned British rule in India as 'the coldest and the cruellest economic tyranny which has been since the days of ancient Rome'. Even 'the plunder taken from South America and Mexico by Spain shrinks into insignificance when compared with this drain, or

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[85] Gould. *Hyndman*, p. 51; Hyndman. *Record*, pp. 158–9, 167–74.

[86] Dadabhai Naoroji. *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (1901), pp. 1–126.

[87] Hyndman. *Record*, p. 173; Hyndman. *The Bankruptcy of India*, p. 40; *The Times* (5 Oct. 1878), 10; (9 Oct. 1878), 10. For evidence of acceptance of the 'drain' theory, see, e.g., *Reynolds's Newspaper* (29 Apr. 1900), 4.

[88] Naoroji. *Poverty and Un-British Rule*, p. 447; Cotton. *Indian and Home Memories*, p. 114; Hyndman. *Record*, p. 176.

economic tribute, extorted from India. Absolutely nothing like it has ever been heard of in the history of the world.' The 'deliberate manufacture of famine on such a scale was never known before', he wrote in 1901. In 1903, after the carnage of the Belgian king Leopold's slave rubber-fiefdom had been exposed, he would still insist that 'all the horrors of the Congo are as nothing compared to this'. Such claims, by any standards, were highly controversial, and remain so today. In India translators of Hyndman's pamphlets were prosecuted, one being sentenced to seven years' transportation, and *Justice* was eventually banned; free debate was not one of the benefits of 'civilisation' then being exported.[89]

The development of these analyses in the late 1870s within a few years propelled Hyndman towards socialism. His proposals found some favour amongst Conservatives, but Gladstone's 1880 electoral victory forestalled reform of Indian policy.[90] Hyndman, who vehemently resisted Gladstone's pro-Russian stance during the election, now found himself 'as a result of my studies on India, my conviction as to the hopelessness of Liberalism and Radicalism, my reading up of the Chartist movement, and my acquaintance with foreign revolutionists ... very near to being an avowed Socialist'. Anti-imperialism propelled him towards socialism, in other words, rather than the reverse. But these sentiments were linked by Hyndman's fear that 'mankind was in the grip of a slave-owning class which, in one shape or another, must hold permanent sway over the majority of mankind'. At this opportune moment, Hyndman, through the philo-Turk Tory MP Butler Johnstone, encountered Marx's *Capital*. He now concluded 'that the only way out of the existing social difficulties was the inevitable development from capitalism to socialism'. Announcing his conversion on 1 January 1881 in an article entitled 'The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch', Hyndman embraced 'a resolute policy of general social improvement throughout Britain, adopting Home Rule and general Colonial Federation instead of domination, and granting self-government to India'.[91]

Hyndman's solution at this time, then, was not a plea for Indian independence as such, but rather a variation on 'Home Rule'. *The Bankruptcy of India* (1886) reprinted Hyndman's three main, scrupulously documented essays on India from 1878–80. Its argument followed the lines laid down by Geddes. To Hyndman 'unscrupulous annexation and

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[89] *Justice* (23 Aug. 1884), 4; Hyndman to Annie Cobden-Sanderson, 2 Feb. 1901, McGill University Library MS. 626; Hyndman. *The Unrest in India*, p. 4; *Justice* (7 Dec. 1907), 5; Crick. *History of the SDF*, p. 299.
[90] On the extent of support in the India Office, see Digby. *'Prosperous' British India*, pp. 197–8.
[91] Hyndman. *Record*, pp. 206–7, 209, 243.

wholesale Europeanisation' (the costly civil and military administration) had 'heaped debt upon the Exchequer ... led to the employment of an excessive number of our countrymen, and ... largely increased that drain of produce to England, which is the most dangerous and deplorable feature of our connection with India'. Heavy taxation, excessive soil depletion, the ruin of native manufacture and increasing poverty were his main themes. The total 'drain' from India, Hyndman estimated, was at least £21 million per annum, not counting the opium trade and profits from private business, out of a revenue of about £40 million, and perhaps as large as the total revenue itself. His recommended policy was 'steady retrenchment at home, and in India of greatly increased employment of natives and careful reconstruction of native governments'.[92]

A financial explanation for imperialism thus predominated in Hyndman's thought from the late 1870s, though there were institutional and structural as well as more conspiratorial variations on the theme. As he put it in 1882, India provided 'little more than a pretext for Europeanization, and an outlet for our capital at good rates of interest'. 'Everything has been turned to the account of English capital,' he asserted in 1883, 'which draws its return from all quarters of the globe.' That the rationale for much imperial conquest was the search for new markets for British goods he reiterated in 1886.[93] Elsewhere he contended that Britain was 'ruining India because our upper and middle classes will persist in exacting from its people agricultural produce to pay interest, home charges, and pensions'. In *Why Should India Pay for the Conquest of Egypt?* (1882) Hyndman insisted that Indian revenues were subsidising a 'nice little war of aggression on Egypt' which benefited 'an international clique' of largely Jewish usurers and bondholders.[94] The cause of the Boer War, an effort to 'to crush down independent little peoples who happen to be economically and socially behind the rest of the world in order to extend the domination of the very capitalism we are fighting against', was merely 'a lust for gold mines'.[95] But Hyndman did not allege that all wars were capitalist in origin. Those in

[92] Hyndman. *The Bankruptcy of India*, pp. 29, 72–3, 153.

[93] Hyndman. *Why Should India Pay for the Conquest of Egypt?* (1882), p. 15; Hyndman. *The Historical Basis of Socialism in England* (1883), p. 282; Hyndman. *The Bankruptcy of India*, p. 76.

[94] Hyndman. *England for All* (1881), p. 142; Hyndman. *Why Should India*, pp. 13, 6, 14; *Justice* (26 Jan. 1884), 3, 'The Oppenheims and Bischoffheims, the Rothschilds, the Barings and the Lawson Levys, Baron de Worms, and the Right Hon. J. G. Goschen – the new Chancellor of the Exchequer as, some say – Sir George Elliott and Sir Julian Goldsmid, these are the main champions of the Egyptian War. This Semitic array and their bottleholders have made a fine thing of it.'

[95] Hyndman to Walter Crane, 30 May 1900, in Crane. *An Artist's Reminiscences* (1907), p. 464; Hyndman. *Social Democracy* (1904), p. 22.

'China, Burmah, South Africa, Morocco, Tonquin, Cochin China, Madagascar, Manchuria, Korea, Cuba, Tripoli, and the Philippines were undoubtedly all of them capitalist wars in the strict sense: wars, that is to say, whose primary object was to obtain an extension of trade and commerce, or to ensure the expansion of some financial scheme'. But nations, he admitted, 'go mad about other things than the mere lust to gain wealth', and Hyndman later regarded the Great War as instigated chiefly by Prussian militarism.[96]

Hyndman's initial encounter with Marx does not appear to have altered his views on empire. His classic work, *England for All* (1881), which obliquely acknowledged Marx's influence, devoted chapters to both Ireland and India, recommending 'legislative independence' for Ireland and 'upright native rule' for India.[97] Respecting the former, Hyndman pointed out the domination of the land by a small minority of often absentee landlords, the destruction of domestic manufactures by England and the recurrence of famine amidst increasing wealth. Upholding the programme of the Land League, to which he belonged, Hyndman supported tenant-right and decentralised administration by an Irish Parliament, not independence. Respecting India, Hyndman condemned the causes which had instigated the 1857 revolt. But the regime of John Company had been benevolent compared with direct Crown rule after 1858. Now India 'became the outlet for the savings of the upper and middle classes and an opening for their sons', commencing 'the reign of capital in good earnest and with it a pressure of taxation, an increase of famines, a deterioration of the soil, and an impoverishment of the mass of the people unprecedented in the long history of India'. Prior to 1857, Hyndman asserted, the 'drain' from India had been some £23 million per annum; by 1880 it was £68 million. Between 1876 and 1879 alone no fewer than 7 million people had died from famine, with real scarcity being vastly worsened by poverty.[98]

England for All thus urged preparing 'the many peoples of India for self-government, by a process of decentralization, by building up the old

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[96] Hyndman. *The Future of Democracy* (1915), pp. 36–7, 54. He said the war 'was due to the last military caste in the world, namely, that of the Prussian Junkers' (*Fabian News*, May 1915, 38–9). He served on the Food Prices Sub-Committee of the Workers' National Committee, and endeavoured, amongst other aims, to gain a measure of workers' control in local committees overseeing food prices, and to extend food cultivation (Hyndman Papers, People's History Museum, WNC 10/3/36, 24/2/2).

[97] Hyndman. *England for All*, pp. 130, 148. But he drew short of calling for immediate independence, arguing that 'If India is to be retained at all, she must have a direct voice in her own administration, as well in England as in India' (p. 151).

[98] Hyndman. *England for All*, pp. 135–6, 140.

States again wherever possible, and by removing the crowd of Europeans who now eat out the prosperity of the country'. Considering the colonies' relations with Britain, Hyndman concentrated on trade, tariff and defence issues, and hoped for 'closer union of peoples of the same race, language, and political traditions, working together for the good of all portions of that noble federation'. A final chapter on 'Foreign Affairs' emphasised the enduring weakness of maintaining a large force defending India. Respecting Europe, Hyndman, like the Positivists, lamented Britain's failure to support France in 1870–1. This demonstrated the inadequacy of non-interventionism as a principle and heralded further grave unrest, notably a 'coming struggle between militarism and democracy', whose consequences could only be mitigated by Britain allying with the 'democracies of Europe'. The following year he calculated that the drain from India was 'more than the entire nett land revenue of the whole of India'.[99] And the much-boasted of railways were not only a profitable investment for British capital, but a quicker way of whisking wealth out of the country, including food during famines. When John Morley, with whom Hyndman sparred for many years over Ireland and India, asserted that a socialist policy was being pursued by Britain in India, Hyndman retorted in 1896 that land nationalisation there in fact had exacerbated poverty, hence foiling its proponents in Britain. In 1911 he called for 'the complete emancipation of India', stressing that it was 'impossible … that our hold upon India should be permanent'. A referendum in Britain, he thought, would 'decide even now in favour of giving self-government to India', since 'English workers are not Imperialists in the bureaucratic sense at all.'[100]

How far, then, was or is it fair to characterise Hyndman's position as 'pro-imperialist'? Whatever was 'progressive' about British rule in India, Hyndman acknowledged in 1902, had to be balanced against the economic consequences:

Certainly we had done some things which were good. We had put down the burning of widows, and to a large extent the slaughter of female children. We had done away with the car of Juggernaut, having introduced a much more complete Juggernaut of our own. We had put down the Thugs. But from the economic point of view these reforms were valueless; and from this point of view our rule was the greatest crime ever committed in history, not excepting what was done by the Spaniards in South America.

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[99] Hyndman. *England for All*, pp. 148–9, 162, 191; Hyndman. *Why Should India*, p. 8.
[100] R. T. Hyndman. *Last Years*, pp. 20–1; Hyndman. *The Economics of Socialism* (1896), p. 163; Hyndman. *The Emancipation of India*, pp. 16, 1, 12.

Did Hyndman then come to support the cause of Indian independence, as opposed to a 'Home Rule' arrangement? In 1897, distinguishing between 'federation with our free colonies' and 'the forcible domination of subject races in Asia, Africa, and elsewhere', Hyndman argued that while closer relations with the more democratic colonies were advantageous to all, military rule anywhere inevitably impeded progress.[101] This pushed Hyndman towards a Home Rule position. At the International Socialist Congress held in Amsterdam in 1904, a special resolution demanded the 're-establishment of native rule' in India, and Hyndman condemned systematic 'forced labour and indentured slavery' endemic to capitalist exploitation abroad. On various occasions he insisted, as he did in 1905, that Britain 'ought at once to give self-government to India'. In 1909 he asserted that the '300,000,000 of Indians have the fullest right to work out their own social salvation in their own way. These great races and great peoples, differing as widely as they may in blood and in religion, can do very well without us.'[102] He was impatient both with the British working classes' willingness to 'acquiesce patiently in the neglect and misgovernment of India', and the reluctance of the Indian National Congress to agree to 'build up native states again and prepare the way for our withdrawal from the country'. He also accused Annie Besant of 'unfortunately, and to my mind inconceivably' opposing 'the great and growing movement for the complete emancipation of India from our ruinous foreign domination'.[103] Nor did he shy away from recommending revolution in India, writing in 1894 that 'we ourselves should cheer on the natives of India to a successful revolt if such a result seemed at all possible. We should wish them well in their struggle for economic emancipation against their oppressors and swindlers of our own blood.' Towards the end of his life he was still contending for 'speedy withdrawal both from India and Egypt'. But 'light English leadership' might still be required: the language of Home Rule as applied to India did not necessarily mean 'independence', at least in the short term, any more than it did respecting Ireland, where, a few years later, he described a similar drain.[104] Here Hyndman argued that while he preferred 'the union of the two peoples in a Democratic Federation to that separation for which many Irishmen contend . . . infinitely should we prefer complete

[101] *Justice* (22 Feb. 1902), 3; (19 June 1897), 4.
[102] Hyndman. *Colonies and Dependencies* (1904), pp. 3, 9–10; *Justice* (25 Feb. 1905), 1; *Dewsbury Social-Democrat* (Jan. 1909), 3.
[103] *Justice* (15 Aug. 1891), 1; (23 Jan. 1892), 1; Hyndman. *Further Reminiscences*, p. 7.
[104] *Justice* (12 May 1894), 1; Hyndman. *Further Reminiscences*, p. 402; Hyndman. *Commercial Crises of the Nineteenth Century* (1892), p. 135.

separation at once, to ... infamous domination'. He claimed that the Social Democratic Federation was 'the first English body to demand complete Legislative Independence for Ireland', but of course the Positivists had done so long beforehand. And where imperialists asserted that Indian population growth evidenced increasing prosperity, Hyndman contended, as with Ireland, the opposite: poverty tended to increase population, while 'increase of population tends to poverty where production is stationary'.[105]

The case of India was for Hyndman further complicated by long-term great power rivalries. Russia was of course an issue from the beginning: it epitomised the direst form of despotism, and the enemy of liberty everywhere, as foreign socialists like Kautsky agreed.[106] Yet this did not justify Britain itself acting the despot. 'Fight Russia! yes in a good cause, and to overthrow a shameful tyranny,' wrote Hyndman in 1885, 'but not, surely to maintain a system of government in India which will cause the very name of England to be a byword for cruelty and mismanagement.' 'If India today were under Native Administration with light European supervision, and a local army,' he added, 'we should have no cause to fear a Russian advance.' In 1896 he emphasised the centrality of the Russian threat to his conception of British foreign policy, writing that

an understanding between England and France and then between France and Germany, is a necessity of the near future, if Europe is not to directly or indirectly come under Muscovite domination ... The unrivalled sea power which we possess ... might well serve to turn the scale in the vast conflict between industrialism and militarism, between domination and freedom, which is manifestly approaching all over the world.

From his later Australian travels, moreover, Hyndman conceded that China, too, might pose a threat to India. But under his plan a 'self-governing, powerful Empire of India, therefore, with her 300,000,000 of population, supported by Great Britain, would have presented a formidable barrier to any hostile Chinese movement'.[107]

Just how far Hyndman's colleagues followed him in such views has also been the subject of some conjecture.[108] The Democratic Federation, founded in March 1881, was not socialist until it became the Social

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[105] *Justice* (29 May 1886), 2; (23 Nov. 1889), 2; Hyndman. *Historical Basis*, p. 473; Hyndman. *The Unrest in India*, p. 6.

[106] 'Whatever one may think of the British regime in India, a Russian one would without a doubt be worse' (Kautsky. *Socialism and Colonial Policy*, p. 51).

[107] *Justice* (8 Mar. 1902), 5; Hyndman. *Record*, p. 177.

[108] On the SDF see also Paul Thompson. *Socialists, Liberals, and Labour* (1967), pp. 112–35, Hobsbawm. *Labouring Men*, pp. 231–8, and Henry Collins. 'The Marxism of the Social Democratic Federation',

Democratic Federation in 1884, and included two Positivists, Henry Crompton and Beesly.[109] The latter insisted that specific aims like 'Justice to Ireland' or 'Justice to the Transvaal' were needed to modify the otherwise woolly radicalism which defined the organisation's goals.[110] With the partial exception of its position during the Boer War, however, the SDF's views on imperialism have not been carefully examined in histories of the organisation. Commentators have noted both that many 'radicals were attracted to the Federation by its proclaimed anti-imperialism', and, confusingly, that the imputation of a marked imperialist strain in the SDF may have resulted from concentrating too much on Hyndman himself.[111] The programme of the Democratic Federation promoted 'National and Federal Parliaments, including Representation of Colonies and Dependencies', with 'Ireland and all other parts of the Empire to have Legislative Independence'.[112] Its opposition to Gladstone's coercion policies led to the withdrawal of radical clubs from the organisation. Such pronouncements did not, however, necessarily imply sovereign 'independence' as such for any part of the empire. For Ireland, however, the possibility was certainly held open by some members. 'That we are in favour of Home Rule, or legislative independence, or even separation for Ireland', H. H. Champion wrote in 1889, 'goes without saying.' But in April 1902 the SDF's paper, *Justice*, proclaimed that prosperity in Egypt had been achieved by 'pursuing precisely the policy which JUSTICE, at any rate, has advocated for India since its foundation. That is to say, by supporting native rule under capable and tolerant English supervision.'[113] This was a far cry from any call for independence. The SDF, which had about five hundred members in 1884, was also remarkably successful in attracting large numbers, including many resident Indians, to a series of meetings in London, Leeds and Manchester to protest against famine conditions in India in 1897.[114] It would eventually, in 1920, concede the right of full independence to Ireland. In its later years, however, *Justice* was usually fairly positive about

in Briggs and Saville, *Essays in Labour History*, pp. 47–69. Many London SDF members may indeed have followed Hyndman on these issues, or at least been indifferent to his views; see Jones. *Languages of Class*, p. 211.

[109] On the organisation generally see Crick. *History of the SDF*, Lee. *Social-Democracy*, Kendall. *Revolutionary Movement in Britain*, pt 1, and M. S. Wilkins. 'The Non-Socialist Origins of England's First Important Socialist Organization', *IRSH*, 4 (1959), 199–207.

[110] Wilkins. 'Non-Socialist Origins', 201.

[111] Crick. *History of the SDF*, p. 158, referring to Etherington.

[112] Hyndman. *The Coming Revolution in England* (1883), p. 24; Hyndman. *A Commune for London* (1887), p. 16; *Dewsbury Social-Democrat* (Jan. 1907), 5–6.

[113] *Report of the SDF* (1896), p. 3; *Labour Elector* (2 Mar. 1889), 9; *Justice* (19 Apr. 1902), 1.

[114] See, e.g., *Justice* (20 Feb. 1897), 1.

the empire. 'No great good and very much harm might easily be done' by breaking up the British empire, it warned in 1923, since 'a Socialist Commonwealth which contains within itself the things it needs for the wants of its people possesses the seeds of success', provided its economic organisation was 'on collectivist lines'. This does not imply socialists holding their noses in order to comply with any Hyndman party line. And there were clearly also Great-British cosmopolitans amongst the SDF ranks: in 1896 a member of the branch at Canning Town proposed English as the international language as 'it is the easiest to learn'.[115]

After the First World War Hyndman increasingly turned his attention to developments in East Asia. His study *The Awakening of Asia* (1919) was delayed by the publishers for fear its message was too alarming. Here Hyndman confessed 'by degrees that I was forced to the conviction that European interference, European trade interests, European religious propaganda, European administration and European domination had been almost wholly harmful'. He detailed at length the forced imposition and enormously destructive effects of the opium trade upon China, wrote sympathetically about Confucianism, justified the Boxer Rebellion, and condemned the wanton and widespread foreign cruelties in its suppression. In 1912 he asserted that the 'annexation of Korea has been carried out with an amount of ruthless cruelty scarcely surpassed by the French in Morocco, by the Germans at Kiaou-Chiaou, by the Belgians in the Congo, or by ourselves towards the aborigines of Australia or the inhabitants of the Soudan'. Warning again of Japanese ambitions in China and its policies in subjugating Korea, Hyndman also repeated his earlier criticisms of British rule in India, and prophesied growing unrest there if provisions for self-government were not introduced. He supported recent Congress plans for so doing, as well as a general abandonment everywhere of 'the fallacious policy of Imperialism', a granting of equal rights to Asians, the renunciation of forced commerce and the 'general acceptance by Europeans of the principle of "Asia for the Asiatics" as a rightful claim'.[116]

Hyndman also devoted a chapter to China in his next book, *The Evolution of Revolution* (1920), which regretted Gordon's role in reimposing Manchu despotism against the Tai-ping Rebellion. It also stated that but 'for European interference, Japan would have followed the rule of Asiatic

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[115] R. T. Hyndman. *Last Years*, pp. 267–8; *Justice* (4 Oct. 1923), 2; *Agenda for the International Socialist Workers and Trades Union Congress, 1896*, p. 35.

[116] R. T. Hyndman. *Last Years*, p. 166; Hyndman. *Further Reminiscences*, p. 34; Hyndman. *The Awakening of Asia* (1919), pp. viii, 51–2, 161, 281–2.

conquerors, and her Mikado and his pro-consuls, displacing the Manchu dynasty, would have become masters of peaceful China a quarter of a century ago'. Hyndman concluded, however, that the 'increasing menace of Japanese domination, as exemplified in the policy of conquest and repression pursued in Korea', might be 'averted by European and American action'. Or the Japanese proletariat might intervene.[117] He acknowledged that the League of Nations ideal had been anticipated by 'St Simon, Owen, Kant and Mazzini, as well as by St Simon's pupil, Comte'. But its actual workings were far from ideal, and Hyndman like the Positivists complained that 'the domination of each nation over the territories it holds outside its own nationality is assumed to be permanent, upon the lines decreed by the Treaty of Peace'. This made the organisation 'an Imperialist and Capitalist, not, assuredly, a Peoples' League'.[118]

We have seen that the charge of 'nationalist' (or worse) respecting Britain has often been levelled at Hyndman. He was indeed happy to acknowledge that he was '*inter*-nationalist not *anti*-nationalist'. But this 'nationalism', as the passage just cited shows, was also applied to other contexts. The administration of Egypt, he insisted, should with 'as little delay as possible . . . be handed over to an Egyptian Government. The security of the Suez Canal can be attained more completely without occupation than with.' When Gordon was clearly threatened, Hyndman agreed that he should be rescued, alienating some comrades. But he added that thereafter the British should withdraw completely and Arabi restored to power.[119] National honour, thus, would be preserved. But was this an 'imperialist' stance, or one which gave precedence to Egyptian nationalism and a general right of self-determination? Following Blunt and Harrison, Hyndman in fact adopted the latter view.

In connection with his nationalism, Hyndman's views of empire have been coloured by his repeated references to Jewish financiers on various occasions, which cost him the friendship of Max Beer, amongst others.[120] The Boer War, frequently condemned as a 'capitalist war', clearly represented a turning-point in this analysis. Yet historians have recognised that this theory also functioned as an alternative form of explanation. The 'Jewish conspiracy' hypothesis originated, as we have seen, during the invasion of Egypt in 1882. Its superficial attractions were obvious: 'foreigners' could be blamed for promoting immoralities of which 'native' Britons

[117] *Justice* (16 July 1904), 4; Hyndman. *The Evolution of Revolution*, pp. 156–69, here 166, 169; *Justice* (3 June 1905), 1.
[118] Hyndman. *The Evolution of Revolution*, p. 363.
[119] Maxse Papers, 458; *Justice* (23 Feb. 1884), 4; (10 May 1884), 4.
[120] Max Beer. *Fifty Years of International Socialism* (1935), p. 165.

were less capable, and race prejudice could reinforce that of class in a doubly damning condemnation of capitalism.[121] The issue of identifying Jews with financiers generally, and the counter-charge of anti-Semitism, was to surface frequently in later years.[122] As early as 1884 Hyndman castigated 'the rings of Jew moneylenders who now control nearly every Foreign Office in Europe', while noting that 'the two ablest Socialists of modern times were Jews'. In the late 1890s another controversy respecting such imputations excited the columns of *Justice*. During the Boer War, Hyndman's attack on 'The Jews' War on the Transvaal' evoked a lengthy correspondence, with Theodore Rothstein strongly condemning 'the muddy current of anti-Semitism into which *Justice* has been drifting'. Hyndman responded that 'the Jew capitalists have been specially prominent in this nefarious business, and it is the Jew-owned yellow press which has been specially virulent in exciting the jingo mob here'. Elsewhere, however, he insisted that his target was cosmopolitan capitalists 'be they Jews or be they Christians'. The SDF's annual meeting in 1900 discussed the issue, and after the controversy subsided *Justice* was more prone to refer to 'capitalist' imperialism.[123]

Yet we should not imagine that the attention these episodes have received implies that other, crude forms of racism were absent from socialist thinking. *Justice* in 1899 noted the 'unspeakably filthy Asiatic manners and customs and generally low standard of life' of the Chinese, and warned that there would be 'trouble' if they were imported as blackleg labour. A *New Age* columnist in 1910, too, averred that

> our English writers on Democracy would do well to leave niggers out of the question when discussing the equality, even the theoretical equality before the law, of the human race. Niggers bear about the same relation to us as the schoolboy does to his master. We must teach them, it is true, but they in their turn must be obedient and must not assume an equality with us.

Writing on 'Racial Development and Self-Government' in 1917, S. H. Halford added a eugenicist slant in insisting that since the 'negroid races' had shown little capacity for developing or borrowing civilisation,

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[121] Crick views this as an effort 'to shift the blame for the war away from British capitalists and British politicians by suggesting that they had been duped by "a gang of millionaire mine owners, chiefly foreign Jews"' (*History of the SDF*, p. 159).

[122] Some later historians have indeed perversely portrayed the 'anti-imperial' type as a variety of deviant personality, intermixed with a sense of inferiority and, not uncommonly, anti-semitism. See Lewis Feuer. *Imperialism and the Anti-Imperialist Mind* (New York, 1986). The issue of Marx's own attack on Jewish financiers is examined in W. O. Henderson. *Marx and Engels and the English Workers* (1989), pp. 78–88.

[123] *Justice* (5 Apr. 1884), 1; (9 July 1898), 3; (7 Oct. 1899), 4; (21 Oct. 1899), 3; (28 Oct. 1899), 6; Hyndman. *The Transvaal War and the Degradation of England* (1899), p. 16; *NA* (2 Jan. 1902), 14.

If we had the courage to defy convention and encourage the addition of the blood of the highest races to the lower, and to prohibit the addition of the blood of the lower races to the higher, we might in time do for the whole of the inferior races what was done individually in the case of Booker Washington.

A Fabian, Gilbert Murray, lecturing on 'The Exploitation of Inferior Races', echoed similar themes, asserting that the 'English-speaking democracies' would not tolerate the importation of other races, who showed little capacity for self-government. It was necessary thus to 'frankly abandon the ideal of one universal British law, which we have never really acted on. We must recognize the dependent position of the lower races.'[124] Racial heterogeneity within the empire could also be used to justify British rule. C. H. Norman believed that 'the diversity of races in the British Empire will prevent any permanent status of British citizenship being established on a recognised principle throughout the Empire, as was the absurdly exaggerated boast of the Roman Empire'. *To-Day* adopted a similar tone in 1883, arguing that

local self-government would hardly be granted to a Community made up largely of antagonistic races equally balanced in numbers, and which would, were they left to themselves, probably engage in a civil war. It would hardly be granted to a people, the majority of which were of a hostile race.[125]

Besides the charge of anti-Semitism, the question of classifying Hyndman's attitudes towards empire is rendered still more complex by his famously troublesome (to fellow socialists) attitude about British armaments, which has often been condemned as 'militarist', though such views also echo a long-standing republican tradition of supporting citizens' militias over standing armies which is usually regarded as *anti*-militarist. Hyndman's argument was here clearly consistent with his views on both the 'free colonies' and the empire. As early as 1896, issuing a 'Manifesto on Foreign and Colonial Policy', Hyndman reassured SDF members that the navy, unlike the army, was not an 'anti-democratic force', and called for its reinforcement. His argument was simple: 'We don't want to be starved or to be conquered by other powers nor do we wish to be deprived of our colonies or to shirk our share in international difficulties.'[126] After 1905 Hyndman's growing anti-Germanism reinforced these leanings, though he regarded the

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[124] *Justice* (12 Aug. 1899), 1; *NA* (15 Dec. 1910), 148; *Socialist Review* (Nov.–Dec. 1917), 310–12; *Fabian News* (June 1900), 13–14.
[125] C. H. Norman. *Nationality and Patriotism* (1915), p. 5; *To-Day* (July 1883), 275.
[126] *Justice* (18 Jan. 1896), 4; (7 Mar. 1896), 1.

'German peril' as 'only an incident in the coming collapse of our Empire'.[127] 'For my part I would gladly see this country go at once to the assistance of France, if she were seriously threatened by Germany,' he wrote to Sir Charles Dilke in 1908, adding that this could not be done without 'a properly-equipped citizen army'.[128] A year later he reiterated to Dilke that for the past twenty-five years he had

worked for a genuine, democratic citizen army, outside militarism as such, and not liable to military discipline except during actual war … I hold that compulsory citizen service in a well-trained and well-equipped national army is a necessity and should at once be introduced for all adult males … But then I would at once proceed to withdraw from India and Egypt.

He upheld a similar view thereafter, writing in 1910 that he favoured maintaining 'a powerful navy, capable of defending this island and of protecting our food supply against any assailant'. Writing on 'Social-Democrats and a Big Navy', against the Labour Party, he justified naval increases in the name of 'a close understanding with our free Colonies', emphasising that Britain was 'dependent on foreign sources for six-sevenths of our food supply'.[129]

   Such views continue to prove controversial partly because the terms of debate are used loosely, when not indeed deployed as blunt weapons of assault. To Crick, this 'concept of foreign policy was strictly nation-alistic; the [1896] manifesto never mentioned "imperialism" nor did it even hint at a class view of international relations. Hyndman's influence was clear; he had, in a unique way, welded his Socialism to his nation-alism.' Hyndman's position is thus to Crick 'anglo-centric', while his opponents', notably Bax's, is characterised as that of 'International Socialism'. By implication Hyndman's 'nationalism' was not 'anti-imperialist' as such. Bill Baker pushes further towards what we will later describe as a 'socialist-imperialist' interpretation: Hyndman wanted 'a powerful Britain with a big navy so that when she became socialist she could spread enlightenment throughout her empire, and use her vast influence among the nations in favour of socialism'. Hobsbawm contrasts Hyndman's 'chauvinist hesitations' to the 'semi-imperialism' of the

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[127] Hyndman to F. A. Maxse, 22 Aug. 1908, Maxse Papers, 458.
[128] Dilke Papers, Add. MS 43920, ff. 143–4 (25 Aug. 1908). Hyndman wanted military training to be compulsory, but exempt from military law (Hyndman to F. A. Maxse, 25 June 1908, Maxse Papers, 458).
[129] Dilke Papers, Add. MS 43921, f. 59 (20 Mar. 1909); Hyndman. *Tariff Reform and Imperialism* (1910), p. 19; *Justice* (20 Aug. 1910), 7. See Howard Weinroth. 'Left Wing Opposition to Naval Armaments in Britain before 1914', *JCH*, 6 (1971), 93–120.

Fabians.[130] Etherington has argued that *England for All* 'boldly attempted
to combine Marxism with imperialism', and that even after the Boer
War, 'the S. D. F. dreams of an empire which would advance rather than
hinder a proletarian revolution, racialism and aggressive nationalism
continued to attract influential support'. He notes, however, that this
vision clashed with that of other SDF members closer to Marx, who
'maintained a consistent anti-imperial stance', and insisted on substitut-
ing the term 'international' for 'imperial' whenever their ideals were
described. Their views, however, exposed during a substantial debate
with Hyndman, led observers like Tom Mann later to recall that the
withdrawal of many SDF leaders to form the Socialist League in
December 1884 resulted from 'a tendency towards National assertion,
the persistent foe of Socialism'.[131]

Yet Hyndman was not anti-internationalist in the least. To the contrary:
his hostility to capitalist imperialism, once well established, remained
unaltered. His wedding of socialism to 'nationalism', if this is indeed an
accurate formulation given a commitment to internationalism overlooked
by too many historians, was also, as we will see, hardly unique. Did he not
argue in 1904 that it was 'the duty of International Socialists, the only
international non-capitalist party, to denounce, and wherever possible to
prevent, the extension of colonisation and conquest, leaving to each race
and creed and colour the full opportunity to develop itself until complete
economic and social emancipation is secured by all'?[132] 'International
Socialist as I am,' he insisted, 'I have ever upheld the right of historic
nationalities to work out their own destinies.' Hyndman thus clearly
approached nationalism in a manner very similar to that of the Positivists,
regarding national identity as the basis for a higher internationalism, and
rejecting extreme cosmopolitanism based on political economy or proletar-
ian class identity. 'To be a useful Internationalist a man must be a
Nationalist first,' he insisted in 1915; the 'solidarity of the human race

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[130] Crick. *History of the SDF*, pp. 158–9; Hobsbawm. *Labouring Men*, pp. 231, 236. Yet the Manifesto
denounced the 'wholesale swindling and robbery' of the British Chartered Company of South Africa,
as well as both the 'protracted occupation of Egypt' and the 'supposed interests of our Empire in
India', and argued for 'a steady reversal of the systematic Europeanisation of India, and a reduction of
the fateful drain of produce from our greatest dependency, accompanied by a building up anew of
native administrations under light English supervision for the time'.

[131] Etherington. 'Hyndman, the Social-Democratic Federation, and Imperialism', 90, 93, 97–8, quoting
Tom Mann. *Memoirs* (1923), p. 45. The League had about seven hundred members at its peak in 1886.

[132] Hyndman. *Colonies*, p. 14. But J. Ellis Barker. *British Socialism. An Examination of its Doctrines,
Policy, Aims, and Practical Proposals* (1908) also claimed that 'Socialists seem, on the whole, to be
opposed to the federation of the British Empire' (p. 173).

must be achieved by national groupings, and can be achieved in no other way'.[133]

It is not unfair, indeed, to deduce a fairly intimate link between Hyndman's and the Positivists' views on nationalism and empire. Like Beesly, Hyndman saw Britain's failure to support France in 1870–1 as its greatest mistake in the late nineteenth century. Though he denounced Comte's proposed 'moralisation of the capitalists', Hyndman admired Beesly greatly, and indeed credited him with having renewed socialist agitation in Britain in 1864. Both spoke together on various occasions against British rule in India, notably in 1897, when Hyndman exclaimed that the 'same class who sweat the Indian people sweat the English workers'. Beesly noted that anti-imperialism was 'a cause in which Positivists and Socialists will be found standing shoulder to shoulder. The Socialists (I would particularly specify Mr Hyndman) have always sounded a true note on the Asiatic and African policy of the capitalist class. They refuse to be lured from the pursuit of industrial changes at home by the delusive bait of more extended markets abroad.'[134] Frederick Gould was also prone to link Positivism to Hyndman, and accordingly praised the latter for never being 'a mere cosmopolitan', while expressing his own disdain for 'the school of thought which regards internationalism as synonymous with anti-nationalism … which professes to regard national frontiers and national and racial characteristics as more or less accidental, if not indeed undesirable'. Gould thus juxtaposed Marx's cosmopolitanism to Hyndman's 'international outlook which was essentially English in its centre-point, while most liberal in its attitude towards all other nationalities'.[135]

If Hyndman thus saw empire as a vehicle for extending a specifically British tradition of liberty and democracy, he was more protective of the rights of other, oppressed, nations than some other socialists. He did not defend the empire in principle in terms of a historic mission to spread 'civilisation', though he approved of certain customs being eradicated by British rule, which points in the same direction. Nor did he justify the further exploitation of any nation's resources upon the basis of a perceived world 'common good' or 'higher' right.[136] If, therefore, he is to be classified

[133] Hyndman. *Further Reminiscences*, p. 78; Hyndman. *The Future of Democracy*, pp. 63–4.
[134] Hyndman. *The Future of Democracy*, pp. 53–4; Hyndman. *Historical Basis*, p. 411; Gould. *Hyndman*, p. 127; *PR* (1894), 37.
[135] Gould. *Hyndman*, pp. 12, 54, 63–4; Hyndman. *Colonies*, p. 14.
[136] But Hyndman did apparently agree to the proposal, discussed above, put forward by S. G. Hobson at the 1904 Amsterdam conference, according civilised nations the right to colonise 'regions where the people are in the lower stages of development' (IISG, Second International Collection, 403).

as a 'socialist imperialist', these positions need to be contrasted with those of other socialists, possibly including Hobson. If Hyndman was 'nationalist', in the sense of retaining a value for specifically British achievements, he was not only a fierce critic of Britain's imperial failings, but equally a 'nationalist' where other nations were concerned, which hardly makes him a 'chauvinist'. His internationalism also had a cosmopolitan element, but it was nowhere as pronounced as Marx's, and did not simply anticipate that 'small nations' would obligingly merge into more 'progressive' entities. Nor does self-defence against militarism, *prima facie*, itself constitute militarism. Let us now consider a very different view of many of these issues.

ERNEST BELFORT BAX: POSITIVISM, MARXISM AND THE NATIONALIST CONTROVERSY

It is usually presumed that the chief representative of the anti-nationalist, anti-patriotic, anti-imperialist and pro-internationalist trend amongst British socialists was Ernest Belfort Bax (1854–1926).[137] Yet paradoxically, Comte's influence upon Bax is often described as having been greater than upon most contemporary socialists. Born into a prosperous evangelical family, Bax was early on exposed to Positivism. A close boyhood friend was the nephew of one of Comte's most ardent British disciples, the philosopher George Henry Lewes.[138] Bax later recalled that he was 'attracted to the Positivists from the fact that they were the only organized body of persons at that time in the country who had the courage systematically to defend the movement of which the Commune was the outcome, as well as the actions of the Commune and its adherents themselves'. These events made him regard 'the idea of human progress as the proper object of religion', which led Bax 'some time after this to attach myself somewhat, although I never formally joined it, to the Positivist body', whose meetings he frequented during the 1870s.[139] His idea of socialism thereafter is generally accounted to be indebted to Comte's conception of humanity. Indeed his willingness to write persuasively in favour of a 'religion of socialism' betrays a deeper debt to Positivism than Bax ever acknowledged, and one

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[137] The only biography is John Cowley. *The Victorian Encounter with Marx. A Study of Ernest Belfort Bax* (1992). See also Stanley Pierson. 'Ernest Belfort Bax', *JBS*, 12 (1972), 39–60. The Positivist elements in Bax's thought are drawn out in Mark Bevir. 'Ernest Belfort Bax', *JHI* (1993), 119–35, esp. 127–8, and are also emphasised in Harrison. *Before the Socialists.*

[138] Bax. *Reminiscences*, p. 21. Lewes's mother, Mrs Edward Lewes, sympathetic to the Commune, doubtless had Positivist leanings.

[139] Bax. *Reminiscences*, p. 30.

which belies his notional 'Marxist' orientation.[140] But Bax would also abandon the formal trappings of religious worship entirely, contending that

the devotion of all true Socialists to-day, will be based on science and involve no cultus. In this last point the religion of the Socialist differs from that of the Positivist. The Positivist seeks to retain the forms after the beliefs of which they are the expression have lost all meaning for him. The Socialist whose social creed is his only religion requires no travesty of Christian rites to aid him in keeping his ideal before him.

And Bax would also swerve sharply away from the Positivist interpretation of the relationship between nationalism and 'Humanity', ultimately embracing neither the former nor, in the medium term at least, the latter. Some still detected a Positivist bias in his pronouncements on these issues. S. H. Swinny, for instance, commented that because Bax affirmed 'that the highest and indeed only true religion for human beings was that which had for its object the devotion to the future social life of Humanity', his devotion to 'Humanity has necessarily involved an attitude of protest towards all exaggeration of patriotism, and especially to Imperialism'. He added, however, the characteristic Positivist objection, that Bax seemed 'to me too suspicious of devotion to country, for in general it is by serving their country that most men serve Humanity, of which each country is an element'.[141]

Bax's internationalism may thus have had a partly Positivist starting-point. But his growing opposition to nationalism as such indicates a movement towards the most extreme form of cosmopolitanism usually expressed on the left in this period. But just how far did Bax move from the conclusions of Positivist diplomacy? In the last year in which he attended Positivist meetings, 1878, he proposed 'the substitution of the international for the national idea, and the adoption of the Federal Republican solution through the splitting up of existing nationalities into independent sections'. The former conception at that time was more broadly associated with the International, the latter 'federal' ideal, as much with Comte's proposals. Indeed Royden Harrison describes this formula as 'Socialism as seen through the spectacles of a well-disposed Positivist'.[142] The

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[140] Cowley. *Victorian Encounter*, p. 63. Gould, however, wrote that Bax 'was entirely at one with the Continental Marxians in regarding a rejection of theology as a necessary factor in the establishment of a stable Social-Democracy ... in this direction, Bax thinks so differently from many British Socialists' (*Hyndman*, p. 73). On rare occasions Bax did note his respect for a conception of 'progressive humanity, considered as an evolutionary whole – Auguste Comte's "Grand Etre Supreme"' (*Justice*, 6 Jan. 1916, 2).

[141] Bax. *The Religion of Socialism* (2nd edn, 1890), pp. 52–3; *PR* (1918), 208–9.

[142] *Echo*, 7 July 1878, quoted in Harrison. *Before the Socialists*, p. 337.

anti-imperialist language Bax would continue to use thereafter thus remains at times close to Positivism. In 1885, for instance, he emphasised that 'the foreign policy of the great internationalist socialist party must be to break up these hideous race empires called empires, beginning in each case at home', which had been the standard Positivist line since Congreve's pamphlets of the late 1850s.[143] Bax eventually hoped that through a new International a 'United States of Europe' might be created. He also shared with the Positivists the assumption that the working classes had 'no conceivable interest, material or ideal ... in defending a capitalistic monarchy, empire or even republic from destruction'. Bax also remained controversially an anti-feminist and anti-suffragist, here too doubtless echoing Comte's prejudices. And there were probably Positivist vestiges in Bax's insistence of Social Democracy that 'the object it places in the stead of *country* is not directly *humanity*, but the International Social-Democratic *Party*, the party of the class conscious proletariat'. For, he acknowledged, that 'the present Socialist party will ultimately embrace humanity is our fervent hope and belief, but that day is not yet, and meanwhile we are content with the lesser object'. In 1918, consequently, with few Positivists in tow, Bax heralded the Bolshevik Revolution as the first 'attempt officially made to subordinate national interests to international morality'. He even denounced Comte's followers as 'swept into the current of Nation-State worshippers with whom humanity as a whole tends to become a mere pious idea'.[144]

Throughout his long career, Bax was to become more closely associated with hostility to nationalism and patriotism than with any other issue. He met Hyndman and joined the Democratic Federation in 1882. Fluent in German, he was, besides Edward Aveling, the only regular English visitor to Engels's house.[145] *Chez* Engels he gained a reputation for obstinacy; difficulties dogged the relationship, as between Hyndman and Marx. Bax seceded with William Morris to form the Socialist League in 1885, until this collapsed under anarchist pressure in 1890, when Bax rejoined the

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[143] 'Imperialism v. Socialism', *Commonweal* (Feb. 1885), 2–3, reprinted in *The Religion of Socialism*, pp. 124–6. Porter assumes Bax adopted 'the basis for a neo-Marxist anti-imperial ideology' only in the later 1890s, and notes that Hyndman wrote frequently on African and Indian affairs (*Critics*, pp. 99–101). But the presumption here again was that this 'was the Marxist line' which was developed, without linkage to other strands of British anti-imperialist thought. See also Ruth Kinna. 'The Jacobinism and Patriotism of Ernest Belfort Bax', *HEI*, 30 (2004), 477–82.

[144] Bax. *Reminiscences*, p. 92; Bax. *Essays in Socialism* (1907), p. 87; *Social Democrat* (Sep. 1900), 274; Bax. 'The Modern State, Internationalism and War', *ER*, 27 (1918), 125–8. The Comtist origins of Bax's anti-feminism are entirely overlooked in Cowley. *Victorian Encounter*, pp. 81–90.

[145] Edward Bernstein. *My Years of Exile* (1921), p. 200.

Social Democratic Federation. Here he played a leading role in popularising a socialist critique of empire. In 1885 he helped inaugurate the League's paper, *Commonweal*, by writing on 'Imperialism v. Socialism'. He announced that the 'jealousy between the courts of Europe, once the sole and until recently the main cause of national enmity and war, has in our day been superseded by the jealousy between the great capitalists of its various nationalities'. He emphasised that 'all commercial wars – and what modern wars are not directly or indirectly commercial?? – are the necessary outcome of the dominant civilisation', and insisted that 'such wars must necessarily increase in proportion to the concentration of capital in private hands – *i.e., in proportion as the commercial activity of the world is intensified, and the need for markets becomes more pressing*'. He warned the working classes 'to consider "patriotism" from this point of view', namely that the 'end of all foreign policy, as of colonial extension, is to provide fields for the relief of native surplus capital and merchandise, and to keep out the foreigner'. These themes remained constantly to the fore in his writings over the next forty years; in 1899 he would again reiterate that 'modern Imperialism is simply the dead-weight lift of capitalism in extremis to save its life for a season yet'. They would, from this point onwards, also be found increasingly frequently in the work of other socialist writers. The 'civilised nations are supplying their own wants, and the loss of their markets is driving England to frantic efforts to seize upon and open up half-civilised and savage countries, the Soudan, Burmah, West Africa, &c, to find an outlet for her still-increasing production', wrote one in 1886; 'new markets are a necessity of the Capitalist system of production', echoed another the following year.[146] The founding of *Justice* in 1884 and of the *Commonweal* in 1885 thus can be seen as marking a turning-point in popularising a socialist critique of imperialism, and Bax's role in both papers was central.

Like Marx and, as we will see, many Fabians, Bax viewed the growth of capitalism and imperialism as interwoven. As in industry capital tended 'to become concentrated in a few large firms, so the tendency of government is to become concentrated in a few large empires, the smaller independent centres being crushed out'. The only alternative to imperialism, then, was 'the federation of a group of populations on a racial and unilingual basis dominated by a single nationality'. How to determine which races, languages and nationalities should predominate where he did not indicate. Bax thought the further development of this process inevitable, but also felt a

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[146] Bax. *The Religion of Socialism*, pp. 123–5; *The Socialist* (Sep. 1886), 21; *Justice* (20 May 1899), 4; Joseph Lane. *An Anti-Statist, Communist Manifesto* (1887), p. 21.

degree of localising counterbalance would occur. Centralisation would continue 'to its furthest point, and not arrested at the national frontier, often a mere arbitrary diplomatic or geographical expression … would have as its natural correlate the rehabilitation within certain limits of the local centre'.[147]

Yet Bax recognised that these principles might have unpleasant implications for those on the receiving end of imperialism. Respecting races 'outside the civilised world', he insisted that the 'position of Socialism towards these races is one of absolute non-interference. We hold that they should be left entirely alone to develop themselves in the natural order of things; which they must inevitably do or die out.' But he also added that it was 'the duty of Socialists to support the barbaric races in their resistance to aggression, [rather] than to acquiesce in the fraudulent pretences by which the people referred to insinuate themselves into favour among those whom it is their object to betray'. This meant that less developed peoples did not necessarily have to pass through capitalism, which obviated a substantial amount of the 'civilisational' argument. At the Stuttgart congress of the International in 1907, Bax insisted that once some group had achieved a certain level of development, 'races in the *rear* can overleap the intermediate phase and, circumstances favouring, attain at once to the highest phase reached by the former', noting that this had 'been signally illustrated in recent years by the case of Japan'. Attempting in this way to bring such races and nations into capitalism, thus, conduced to 'one end solely, the *prolongation* of the capitalist system by securing it a wider area of operation; in other words, consolidating it on a broader basis'.[148]

Yet if one or a few nations notionally occupied the 'van' of progress, what could prevent them from abusing their supposedly superior position? Bax conceded that no nation was 'so supereminently excellent as to have a right to claim by virtue of its national characteristics any prominent or definitive leadership in the transition from modern capitalist Civilisation to Socialism'. His conclusion was thus that socialists needed to 'jealously defend the relative equality spoken of against the undue pretensions of its own nationality', such that 'every Socialist ought to be an anti-patriot as the phrase is nowadays understood, and hence therefore "any other country but one's own" is not such a bad motto after all for a Socialist foreign policy'. Yet even Bax, at least once, also let slip the thought that if Britain could become

[147] Bax. *The Ethics of Socialism* (2nd edn, 1891), p. 40; *Social Democrat* (July 1900), 204.
[148] Ernest Belfort Bax and Harry Quelch. *A New Catechism of Socialism* (5th edn, 1907), p. 36; *Justice* (14 Sep. 1907), 6; Bax. *Essays*, p. 131.

'mistress of a vast share of this world's surface … by righteous means, well and good'.[149] He was here perhaps closer to Hyndman than was usually evident.

It followed, however, that to Bax 'patriotism' could only ever be retrogressive for socialists. In antiquity, he thought, patriotism was rooted in the city-state, and in the medieval era, the manor and township. Now it was 'exploited wholly and solely in the interests of capitalistic schemes of aggrandisement, expansion, acquirement of new markets, of cheap native labour, of the mineral wealth of undeveloped countries, etc.'. A romantic ideal of nationalism played no role here. Yet there was some latitude where unfree nationality and economic exploitation overlapped (but when did they not?). A 'partial exception' thus had to be made in the case of Ireland 'because English rule in Ireland is so intimately bound up with the question of absentee landlordism and the whole Irish agrarian problem'. And in the case of long-established colonies like Australia, Bax's view was that 'Socialism is not Imperialism. It is the antithesis of Imperialism. These societies concern Socialism merely as independent communities, and not as dependencies of a dominant mother country.'[150] Bax was thus amongst the most vehement opponents of any idea of a 'national' socialism, writing in 1895 that there 'is and can be no English socialism as such. There is but one Socialism, based on history and the laws of economic development.'[151]

It was the Boer War, as we have seen, which brought the question, for Bax, of the absolute incompatibility of socialism with 'patriotism' to a head. The 'word patriotism, or its equivalents and derivations', was now 'upon every one's lips'. Whatever value it had originally had, based upon kinship or local proximity, however, had now 'lost all real meaning … and become a bogus and a sham sentiment … capable of being exploited by interested persons in a manner which renders it one of the most dangerous frauds at present existing'. He urged his readers to 'finally abandon the national flags of their masters, and range themselves under the red banner of international Socialism and human brotherhood' by repudiating 'patriotism as implying any special duty to the State system in which they happen to be born as against any other'. Yet in 1900 he wrote that socialists also believed 'in independence for nationalities as against annexation or interference from without by the *force majeure* of other nationalities – acting in their own interests – but in no other sense'. This was potentially a very notable

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[149] *Justice* (15 Feb. 1896), 6; *Social Democrat* (Feb. 1899), 36.
[150] Bax. *Problems of Men, Mind, and Morals* (1912), p. 123; Bax. *Essays*, p. 98; *Justice* (14 Sep. 1907), 6.
[151] Bax. *Reminiscences*, p. 264; *Justice* (14 Sep. 1895), 4.

concession, since it identified 'good' nationalism with independence from coercive foreign rule as such, possibly embracing many more 'exceptions' than Ireland. For any 'exception' created by the overlapping of ethnic dependency and economic exploitation – a common enough combination – might end up proving a contrary rule: that all such nationalities had a legitimate right of independence. Yet to assert such claims could, for Bax, somewhat paradoxically, not be done under the rubric of 'patriotism', though he did not indicate how the assertion of a right to national independence might appear in another guise. In 1901 Bax again protested against 'any attempt to revive the word "patriotism", or to refurbish it for democratic purposes'. He argued that it was 'a bad word, at best, of necessity carrying with it the suggestion of race exclusiveness . . . while at its worst it implies a glorification of national infamy. Social-Democrats want no "true patriotism" whatever that may mean. They want to do away with Patriotism altogether and to substitute in its place the "Internationalism" of the class-conscious proletariat.'[152] Yet this clearly left him open to the charge of inconsistency, or of refusing to admit that he had in principle sanctioned a considerable range of potentially legitimate nationalist claims, a range indeed so wide that it left his original position in tatters.

How widely held were Bax's views on these issues? The blacksmith's son and SDF activist Harry Quelch, a close collaborator with Bax, does not seem to have concurred with these opinions. 'Internationalism presupposes the autonomy of the nation within its sphere,' Quelch said in 1905, 'just as it stands for the fullest individuality within the sphere of individualism. It is not internationalism but imperialism which precludes patriotism.' Quelch similarly argued that 'Social Democracy is international, not anti-national. We have always championed the rights of nationalities, and it is no sound argument against that championship to object that nationality is a mere bourgeois idea.'[153] In 1912 he took a line close to that of the Positivists, calling for 'Home Rule all round – the self-government of these different nationalities', including Egypt, Ireland, India and the Boers:

To surrender our own national autonomy, to be really anti-patriotic, would be to justify the subjection of the autonomy of any other nation, and would be nothing other than imperialism. It is imperialism, therefore, not Socialism, which is anti-patriotic; and Socialism is not the antithesis of patriotism, but of imperialism . . . Socialism means the same relationship between nations as it implies between individuals – the fullest possible freedom for each.

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[152] *Justice* (4 Nov. 1899), 6; Bax. *Essays*, pp. 89, 93–4; *Social Democrat* (July 1900), 203–4; *Justice* (1 May 1901), 7.
[153] *Social Democrat* (15 June 1905), 328; Harry Quelch. *Literary Remains* (1914), p. 180.

Despite Bax, *Justice* also often adopted a more balanced approach to nationality. In 1900, writing on 'Socialism and Nationalities', Theodore Rothstein supported the idea that 'groups of persons will live together in one place enjoying a common language, a common history and common traditions, customs, and institutions, so long will they be recognised as distinct nations, with a full right to national existence'. A leader in 1905 also insisted that

Socialism no more involves the crushing out of nationality than it involves the crushing of individuality. Socialism means national co-operation between individuals … and international co-operation between nations … and stands for national autonomy in all things national, and Home Rule all round. We are for the right of every people to manage their own affairs, even if in the view of some 'disinterested' neighbour they managed them badly.

J. Bruce Glasier, too, supposed that socialism aimed

not to destroy families, municipalities, or nations, but to vivify them and endow them with greater sustenance and freedom. It comes to harmonise their interests, and widen, by the fullest national and international co-operation, their powers for their individual and collective well-being.

But there was frequent ambiguity as to how this principle should be applied. Writing in 1907 respecting Sinn Fein, for instance, *Justice* upheld 'the right of all peoples to govern themselves, and to be able to realise their own national individuality'. But it equally wondered whether 'Nationalism, with race hatreds and strife between peoples, should be allowed to go down with the past. Internationalism, with its ideals of unsurpassed grandeur, of fraternity and peace, should be the creed of to-day.'[154] Again, thus, we see a substantial and unresolved tension between justifying nationalist claims and supporting internationalism.

Having thus dug himself into a difficult position when the Boer War commenced, Bax proceeded to pursue the logic of anti-patriotism to ever more unpopular logical extremes. If socialists could be 'pro-Boer', they might also have divided loyalties in a European war, the rock on which of course the Second International would eventually founder. In 1900 Bax suggested that socialists could repel an 'invasion of a despotic power, which would result in our losing such liberties as we already possess'. But – shades of Thomas Paine in 1804 – 'suppose the revolution to have been successful in France or Germany, and the reaction to be getting the better of the

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[154] *Justice* (18 May 1912), 5; (9 June 1900), 4; (23 Sep. 1905), 1; J. Bruce Glasier. *The Meaning of Socialism* (1919), p. 197; *Justice* (6 Apr. 1907), 1.

revolutionary movement here, we take it that an invasion by our comrades from France or Germany would not be resisted, but welcomed, by the Social-Democrats here'. In 1902 he reiterated that he recognised '*per se* the right of every people to its native soil, and the defence of that native soil against hostile invaders as a duty incumbent upon its inhabitants'. He added that 'where the attacking party was merely another capitalist State, the primary duty of defending the native soil, other things being equal, would of course apply'. But otherwise 'it might be the duty of the Socialists … actively to support an invasion from a more advanced democratic state made avowedly in the interests of Social-Democracy, for the purpose of overthrowing a home-made despotism, or a home-made capitalism'. And what if 'the bulk of a nation has supported a Government in committing a national crime against a weaker people, accompanied by every circumstance of cowardice, meanness, and cruelty'? If now 'another State seized the opportunity of invading the country of this criminal nation' the duty of Social Democrats would be 'to stand aloof. The nation deserves chastisement, and the attacking State must be regarded as, in a sense, the inflictor of a just punishment.'[155]

Such proposals, by brutally exposing how loyalties might divide over first principles, were bound to prove immensely controversial; Hyndman's response was that Bax 'bitterly hates England and Englishmen'. In 1911 the dispute over militarism led to the resignation of several Social Democrats, and Bax's repeated denial 'that a successful invasion of these shores would be necessarily in the long run prejudicial to the general interests of the Socialist Party'. This provoked F. Victor Fisher's irate response that

The very worst thing the Socialist movement could do is to convince the great mass of the people, who must be converted to Socialism if Socialism is to be realised, that Socialism entails anti-patriotism. *Because* we love our country we wish to improve her lot. *Because* we have reason to be proud of her past we wish to be still prouder of her future. *Because* we hold her so dear we will not have her contaminated for ever by a base plutocracy. *Because* we come of a race that has led the world in so much that hath enduring glory, so we will strive to hold the torch higher and higher still.

During the fierce debate over militarism at several socialist congresses, Bax resolutely maintained that 'the logical outcome of the Internationalism of modern Socialist movement involves the adoption of an antinational and

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[155] *Justice* (13 Jan. 1900), 4; (5 Apr. 1902), 6; Bax and Quelch. *A New Catechism of Socialism*, p. 35. Paine had supported Bonaparte's invasion plans in 1804.

anti-patriotic attitude'.[156] The issue of nationality finally came to a head at the outbreak of the First World War (when Bax, in fact, came round to a pro-war position). Many socialists now agreed that some scheme for a 'United States of Europe' must follow the war. Many conceded the weakness of relying on the pre-war order of national independence. As H. N. Brailsford put it in 1915,

Nationality is ... no sufficient basis for a new Europe ... The nationalist ideal is a flag of revolt. It is a necessary protest against the reign of force and the brutality of numbers. Treat it as a constructive system and it would be bankrupt at the first trial. There is no independent State, there is not even a sovereign State, except a State so strong that it can resist all others.

Yet it was precisely these same conditions which produced increasing support amongst socialists for a British commonwealth. E. D. Morel, in discussing the various national and internationalist alternatives on offer for a post-war scenario, stressed that

The British commonwealth has evolved ideals in the art of Imperial government which have generated a greater measure of human liberty for a greater aggregate of the human race than any system which the Continent of Europe has created or could by any possibility have created, given geographical conditions.[157]

This, we will see, presents an interesting contrast to the proposals Hobson offered in *Imperialism* (1902).

WILLIAM MORRIS AND THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE

We may consider William Morris after Bax given their collaboration in the Socialist League, though Morris's views on foreign affairs have attracted scant mention. His first interest in the subject dates from an alarmed letter to the *Daily News* of 24 October 1876, respecting war to aid Turkey, where he termed himself a 'hysterical sentimentalist' allied with Gladstone and the Liberal Party. Later that year he became treasurer of the Eastern Question Association, which was organised by Henry Broadhurst to resist Disraeli's alliance strategy with Turkey, and pledged to promote British neutrality in the region. Under the auspices of the Association, Morris published a short pamphlet, *Unjust War: To the Workingmen of England* (1877), which warned of interference in Britain's foreign policy by 'greedy gamblers on the Stock Exchange, idle officers of

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[156] *Justice* (8 Feb. 1902), 3; (22 July 1911), 3; (29 July 1911), 2; Bax. *Problems*, p. 125.
[157] *LL* (11 Mar. 1915), 7; (26 Aug. 1915), 7.

the army and navy'.[158] By 1879 Morris's political interests led him to become treasurer of the National Liberal League, a largely working-class organisation opposed to the government's Eastern policies. In this capacity he sent birthday greetings to Gladstone in December 1879. In the early 1880s, however, he passed rapidly through a radicalism 'made for and by the middle classes', which he now concluded would 'always be under the control of rich capitalists'.[159]

Positivism may have played a role here. Morris's first lectures on art to the working classes were organised by a Positivist, Professor Henry Warr, who was secretary of the Cobden Club.[160] Morris had known Vernon Lushington since the mid-1850s, and corresponded with Frederic Harrison as early as 1881. Since his foreign policy interests were primarily motivated by a 'religious hatred of all war and violence' and of 'national hatred and prejudice', it is most unlikely that Morris could have overlooked Positivism's distinctive approach to such issues. Morris, moreover, thought that 'the aim of Socialists should be the founding of a religion', which should have predisposed him towards Positivism.[161] He occasionally referred to Positivism in his political lectures.[162] But while early rejecting any proposals to 'moralise' capitalism, which he characterised as Positivist, Morris evidently knew little of the details of these propositions, and is unlikely to have read Comte.[163] This is curious, given the fact that he himself, like Engels and Hyndman, epitomised the moralised capitalist of Comte's ideal.

Angry at 'the Liberal party for allowing itself to stiffen into Whiggery or practical Toryism', and with some coaxing from Bax, Morris by 1883 declared himself a socialist. Clearly Gladstone's foreign policy played a role here. Morris now bemoaned 'last year's events in Ireland and Egypt (especially the latter, where the Liberal "leaders" "led" the party into mere

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[158] May Morris. *William Morris* (2 vols., 1966), vol. II, pp. 483–7; Morris. *Collected Letters*, vol. I, pp. 323–6; Henry Broadhurst. *Henry Broadhurst, MP* (1901), p. 81; Philip Henderson. *William Morris* (1967), p. 175; Morris. *The Letters of William Morris*, ed. Philip Henderson (1950), pp. 388–9. Some biographers have seen the germs of his 'later socialist teaching' in this accusation. See Thompson. *William Morris*, p. 631.

[159] Morris. *Collected Letters*, vol. II, p. 199 (1883).

[160] See *The Collected Works of William Morris* (1912), vol. XVI, p. xii.

[161] Morris. *Collected Letters*, vol. II, pp. 157, 230, 219. Morris later defined this: 'all we ask is that people should hold that their actions are to be regulated by their responsibility to each other as social human beings; this is the religion of Socialism' (ibid., vol. II, p. 431).

[162] E.g., in reference to the motto, 'Live for Others', in 1887 (Morris. *Collected Works*, vol. 23, p. 57).

[163] Morris. *Collected Works*, vol. XXIII, p. 78; Morris. *Collected Letters*, vol. II, p. 400. He wrote to a correspondent in later 1884: 'About Harrison and his Positivism I daresay you know more than I do; but though he has some wholesome views against the exploitage of barbarous countries is no more advanced than Lord Salisbury is, or say than Lord J. Manners' (ibid., vol. II, p. 339).

Jingoism)'.[164] By 1884, aware of the line Blunt and the Positivists had adopted on Egypt, Morris agreed that the 'truth is that our entire action in Egypt has been shaped by a gang of international loan-mongers from the first outbreak of the soldiery under Arabi until now'. He noted elsewhere the general injustice of British rule in India, and told a friend that 'Australia ought to have been left to the blacks, New Zealand to the Maoris, and South Africa to the Kaffirs.'[165] War with Burma in 1885 Morris regarded as

just one step on that road of reckless market-hunting to which the necessities of our Capitalists push us on continuously . . . the system which makes them our masters is doomed unless they can ensure continuous expansion of manufacture for profit, they cannot stop in their endeavors for the discovery of the laying open of new markets, since the competition of all civilized nations is so keen & is every day growing keener: this Burmese case . . . if properly managed will afford a magnificent field for getting rid of our surplus stock of wares.[166]

He wrote to Blunt in early 1885 that 'I hope by this time most people know what we Socialists think of the Khartoum-stealers and the spreaders of the blessings of shoddy civilisation.' In February 1885 the Socialist League issued its most important pronouncement on foreign policy, resolving that 'the invasion of the Soudan was undertaken with the covert intention of exploiting that country for the purposes of commercial greed; and that, therefore the check inflicted on the British invaders should be hailed by all supporters of the cause of the people as a triumph of right over wrong, of righteous self-defence over ruffianly brigandage'. It also praised the Mahdi, Mehemet Achmet, as 'the brave man who in Oriental fashion is undertaking the deliverance of his country'.[167] Morris added on behalf of the League in March 1885 that not only had Gordon 'betrayed the trust reposed in him & used his military & administrative capacity for the purpose of bringing the Soudanese under the subjection of a vile tyranny', but

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[164] Morris. *Collected Letters*, vol. II, pp. 200, 202; Joseph Edwards, ed. *The Labour Annual* (1896), p. 196. 'The action and want of action of the new Liberal Parliament, especially the Coercion Bill and the Stockjobbers' Egyptian War quite destroyed any hope I might have had of any good being done by alliance with the radical party, however advanced they might call themselves' (ibid., p. 230).

[165] Morris. *Political Writings* (Bristol, 1994), p. 10; Morris. *Journalism*, p. 223; Paul Bloomfield. *William Morris* (1934), p. 201.

[166] Morris. *Collected Letters*, vol. II, p. 477. Porter asserts that among the 'English Marxists Morris was the first to relate imperialism so closely to overproduction. But the idea was not his. He was only repeating the common view of the imperialists themselves' (*Critics*, p. 44).

[167] Morris. *Collected Letters*, vol. II, pp. 397, 390; IISG, Socialist League Collection, 171; *Manifesto of the Socialist League on the Soudan War* (2 Mar. 1885), p. 3. Another motion added 'that the War in the Soudan was prompted by the capitalist class, with a view to the extension of their fields of exploitation. And we admit that the victory gained by the Soudanese is a triumph of right over wrong by a people struggling for their freedom' (ibid., p. 399).

We assume, as we must, that the Mahdi is the representative of his countrymen in their heroic defence of their liberties; on that assumption we may well 'approve' of him if we are not to condemn Garibaldi or 'Wallace wight' ... it must be considered an article of faith with us to sympathise with *all* popular revolutionary movements, though we may not agree with all the tenets of the revolutionists: e.g. we are *inter*nationalists not nationalists, yet we sympathise with the Irish revolt against English tyranny.[168]

Again, thus, we see both that Ireland was a 'partial exception', and yet again that a genuine nationalism was recognised by Morris in principle which merited support under most circumstances.

Also worthy of brief consideration is the proposition that Morris was a vigorous supporter of a 'Little Englander' vision of socialism. His famous 'utopian romance', *News from Nowhere*, with its antagonism to Bellamyite centralisation and renunciation of 'the pretension to be the market of the world', might well appear to be the apotheosis of the 'Little England' ideal, albeit wrought in medieval guise. For while it made no mention of empire as such, the work portrayed Britain as 'a garden, where nothing is wasted and nothing is spoilt, with the necessary dwellings, sheds, and workshops scattered up and down the country, all trim and neat and pretty'.[169] Priority, in other words, was to be given to self-sufficiency over international trade. None of Morris's major programmatic statements, such as *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome* (1893), written with Bax, discussed empire at any length, however, though the latter pamphlet did propose to 'destroy the distinctions of classes and nationalities'. Thus we can presume that Morris substantially agreed with Bax's view of nationality, for elsewhere he wrote against Bellamy that 'modern nationalities are mere artificial devices for the commercial war that seek to put an end to, and will disappear with it'. In its 'Statement of Principles' the Socialist League also pledged that

One harmonious system of federation throughout the whole of civilisation would take the place of the old destructive rivalries. There would be no great centres breeding race hatred and commercial jealousy, but people would manage their own affairs in communities not too large to prevent all citizens from taking part in the administration necessary for the conduct of life, so that party politics would come to an end.[170]

Though some might detect anarchist sympathies in this bias against central-isation – Proudhonist ideas, for instance, had surfaced repeatedly in the

[168] Morris. *Collected Letters*, vol. II, p. 410; IISG, Socialist League Collection, 2286.
[169] Morris. *News from Nowhere* (1899), pp. 76, 80.
[170] *Commonweal* (22 June 1889); IISG, Socialist League Collection, 5.

debate over the Paris Commune – the possibility of Positivist 'civic' influences here, too, and Marxist federalism, cannot be discounted.

We need now to examine the most successful, if also still more controversial of the late nineteenth-century socialists, Robert Blatchford, reputedly the most insular, and amongst the non-Fabians, the most socialist-imperialist of his breed.[171] Initially converted by Hyndman and Morris, Blatchford epitomised, it has been said, 'the creed of Little Englandism carried through to its conclusion, to a vision of England small, and white and clean, self-supporting, simple in its way of life, where each man contributed to the commonwealth according to his ability'. 'We were out for Socialism and nothing but Socialism and we were Britons first and Socialists next,' Blatchford once announced. His has even been termed a 'nationalist socialism',[172] and as such frequently condemned. To Semmel, Blatchford advocated 'economic nationalism, imperialism, militarism, jingoism', and was 'an uncompromising opponent of parliamentarianism and the party system'. Porter asserts that Blatchford's 'consistent anti-imperialism before 1898 withered in the heat of the build-up to the Boer War'.[173] Indeed few figures on the left have received such bad press, particularly when contrasted to, for example, Morris, the one still widely read socialist figure from the period. Yet Blatchford's pronouncements about empire, nearly always quoted respecting the Boer War, are easily misunderstood. As early as 1889 he wrote that 'I can imagine England free, independent, secure and happy ... But that she can never be while she is a mighty Empire and a great commercial nation.' This epitomised, indisputably, a 'Little England' vision. How then did Blatchford so easily embrace what is often viewed – though we must reconsider the terminology shortly – as a 'social-imperialist' ideal?[174]

[171] The standard contemporary sketch is A. Neil Lyons. *Robert Blatchford* (1910).
[172] Laurence Thompson. *Robert Blatchford* (1951), p. 111; Robert Blatchford. *These Eighty Years* (1931), p. 199; Hinton. *Protests and Visions*, p. 34. Paul Ward. *Red Flag and Union Jack. Englishness, Patriotism, and the British Left, 1881–1924* (1998) is more nuanced, though its approach is rejected in Mira Matikkala's 'Anti-imperialism, Englishness and Empire in late-Victorian Britain', p. 11.
[173] Semmel. *Free Trade Imperialism*, p. 224; Porter. *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, p. 217. There is some treatment of these views in L. J. W. Barrow. 'The Socialism of Robert Blatchford and the "Clarion" 1889–1918', PhD thesis, University of London, 1975, pp. 389–402.
[174] Quoted in Thompson. *Blatchford*, p. 110; Logie Barrow. 'The Origins of Robert Blatchford's Social Imperialism', *BSSLH*, 19 (1969), 9–12.

Blatchford's popularity – from which his proximity to the heart of the labour movement might be inferred – is undisputed. From obscure beginnings, his name 'enshrouded in an almost impenetrable mystery' in mid-1891, his rise was meteoric.[175] His best-selling *Merrie England* (1893) sold more than a million copies; it was said that 'for every convert made by "Das Kapital," there were a hundred made by "Merrie England"'; the actual ratio was probably nearer one to a thousand.[176] The book promoted 'England for the English', an ideal of autarky which rejected the image of Britain as the 'workshop of the world', reduced industry to the limits of domestic needs and embraced '*frugality of body and opulence of mind*'. But while it introduced one anecdote about British landholdings in Swaziland, no complaint about imperialism was voiced.[177] Blatchford's *Britain for the British* (1902) also addressed the issue of foreign trade, but was silent on the empire as such, though linking it to the threat of cheap labour undermining British employment.[178] It did, however, comment sympathetically on the plight of both Indian and English workers, noting that both often had the same masters. Blatchford's semi-fictional brief account of the Zulu War, 'The Last of the Borderers', expresses no sense of imperial guilt, though a character in a Blatchford story regretted that the Indian Sepoys had been 'shamefully treated by our people'. His 'utopian romance', *The Sorcery Shop* (1909), however, imagined that there was no empire in the ideal future.[179]

Founded in 1891, Blatchford's *Clarion*, with its lively combination of sport and theatrical coverage, plain English and moralistic socialism, was far and away the best-selling socialist publication of the epoch. In its early years the paper rarely commented extensively on imperial issues. Its general view, as stated in 1893, was that

the decay of British agriculture, the decline of British trade, and the depletion of the earnings of British industry, here in our own country, are matters of more moment to the British people than the dream of Imperial aggrandisement abroad … we confess to belonging to that class of parochial-minded people who recognise the ring of true patriotism in the phrase 'England for the English,' and the ring of true honesty in the less frequently heard sentiment of 'Africa for the Africans.'[180]

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[175] *Workman's Times* (3 July 1891), 1.
[176] Blatchford. *These Eighty Years*, p. xiii. It was translated into Welsh, Dutch, German, Swedish, Spanish, Hebrew, Danish and Norwegian by 1908.
[177] Blatchford. *Merrie England* (1908), pp. 13, 16, 70, 243.
[178] E.g., Blatchford. *Britain for the British* (1902), p. 129; Blatchford, *Merrie England*, p. 35.
[179] Blatchford. *Britain for the British*, p. 130; Blatchford. *Stunts* (1922), pp. 108–14; Blatchford. *The Nunquam Papers* (1895), p. 67; Blatchford. *The Sorcery Shop* (1909), p. 56.
[180] *Clarion* (4 Mar. 1893), 3. A balanced view of the *Clarion*'s approach is presented in Preben Kaarsholm. 'Pro-Boers', in Raphael Samuel, ed., *Patriotism* (3 vols., 1989), vol. I, pp. 110–26.

When it noted the excesses of British policies, as in 1896, the *Clarion* sharply condemned

The iniquity, the treachery, the chicanery of our dealings with savage races in India, in Afghanistan, in Zululand, in Matabeleland, and in almost every part of the world, where we have cursed the natives with our religion and our rum, our missionaries, and our consuls, our commerce and our arms.

Blatchford dismissed attempts to 'lay frantic hands on every tract of territory – Matabeleland or the Transvaal, for instance', as simply theft. But aside from ascribing such invasions as motivated by a desire of 'opening up new markets', the *Clarion* rarely developed a nuanced analysis of imperialism. Blatchford derided 'the dark and devious ways of money-snatchers, land-grabbers, and politicians in Egypt, South Africa, India, and China'.[181] But he had little marked interest in or strong views on India, for instance, and his understanding seems at times downright naive, as when, writing vaguely about the supposed misappropriation of famine funds in 1897, he asserted that he was 'beginning to doubt whether our rule is such an unmitigated blessing as we are led to suppose'. Elsewhere, too, the *Clarion* was willing to acknowledge moral culpability, but could not posit an alternative to the existing order involving a dramatically different agenda. Part of the problem we have already witnessed in the case of the Positivists' difficulties in defining precise withdrawal strategies. In 1898, for instance, the *Clarion* noted:

Take India as an example of the problems of statesmanship and empire. We ought never to have conquered India; very well. But we *did* conquer it, and we must govern and defend it, or give it up. And if we are to give it, to whom is it to be given, and *when*, and *how*? And in the meantime *what*? We may be 'little Englanders,' or we may be 'Big Englanders,' and in either case our position and our duties are clear. We must disarm; or keep our powder dry. Give us Socialism, and we need not in the least concern ourselves about new markets in China.[182]

Blatchford's take on the empire was strongly coloured by his own military background, which made him almost instinctively identify with British arms. Like that of Cobbett, with whom he was often compared, his sense of patriotism was formed in the army, as a sergeant of the Fusiliers. Even some friends thought that 'in essential matters of the spirit' he was 'an ardent and irrevocable Tory'. As early as 1897 he reflected that

[181] *Clarion* (21 Mar. 1896), 93; (17 Oct. 1896), 1; Blatchford. *Altruism* (1898), p. 3.
[182] *Clarion* (6 Feb. 1897), 1; (12 Feb. 1898), 52.

I daresay the Indian Mutiny was largely due to our brutality and oppression. But if I had been at Lucknow I should have shot as straight as I knew how. And I think the men who defended Lucknow and the men who relieved it were faithful and brave men, to whom the British nation should be grateful, and of whom it should be proud.[183]

The Boer War rendered such views infamous within the socialist movement when the *Clarion* came to be associated with a pro-war outlook. Yet it condemned imperialism in 1899 as

puerile, barbarous, mercenary, and mean. It is unchristian, it is inhuman, it is a casting back to savagery and blind feud, to the barbarous love of vulgar pomp, of shameless plunder, of noisy boister, and of ruffian pride in brute force, and skill in the arts of butchery, treachery, and conquest.

The paper also attacked patriotism in the sense of 'the desire to exalt our own country above all others, to enhance the glory or extend the power of Britain at the expense of all the other nations of the world'. This was

less noble than Internationalism ... he who would subordinate the interests and the honour of mankind to the interests and the honour of his own country holds a smaller and a narrower and a meaner ideal than he who declaring, as Socialists declare, that all men are brothers, endeavours to the best of his power to act lovingly and justly toward the whole human race.

When war finally came, however, Blatchford later recalled that 'nearly all the Socialists and Labour people declared themselves pro-Boer and I remained pro-British'. Believing that '*both parties are in the wrong*', Blatchford insisted that he was 'a Socialist, and a lover of peace' but 'also an Englishman', and that while embracing 'my fellow men of all nations as well as any Christian or humanitarian amongst you', he also loved 'England more than any other country. Also I am an old soldier, and I love Tommy Atkins ... I cannot go with those Socialists whose sympathies are with the enemy. My whole heart is with the British troops ... until it is over I feel called upon to declare that I am for my own country.' It was an emotional as well as intellectual turning-point for Blatchford. He even instructed his daughter to play 'God Save the Queen' once a day 'to the glory of British arms'.[184] At a socialist congress his picture was turned towards the wall.

It is easy to misinterpret such sentiments. Blatchford has been described as feeling compelled to 'swim with the popular tide', but the issue as to

[183] Lyons. *Blatchford*, p. 10; *Clarion* (3 July 1897), 212.

[184] *Clarion* (27 May 1899), 161; Blatchford. *These Eighty Years*, p. 200; *Clarion* (21 Oct. 1899), 332; Lyons. *Blatchford*, p. 10.

whether he jumped or was pushed into it remains germane. Faced with, essentially, an imperialist *fait accompli*, he could not bring himself to renounce the empire, despite its origins. And keeping it meant defending it. Blatchford reiterated that he was 'somewhat of a little Englander' who did not 'believe in taking the lands of "inferior races" by conquest and sharing them out amongst the "superior race"'. But he then asked his socialist friends a plain question:

Do you wish to give your colonies up, or to fight for them? One or the other you must do. To give them up would be difficult and dangerous to us, and not good for the colonies. If we are to defend them we must have soldiers and ships. If we have soldiers and ships it will not be wise nor just to call those soldiers murderers, nor to wish for their defeat, not to grudge them thanks for their gallantry.[185]

It was a stark choice. Since Blatchford offered no independence strategy for the colonies or empire, imperialism had somehow to be combined with socialism in a manner acceptable to *Clarion* readers, by fashioning a more enlightened imperial ideal. The task fell to Blatchford's assistant on the *Clarion*, 'Dangle' (Alex M. Thompson), later to praise 'the greatest Empire the world has known', to define the new line in late 1899. Just as the Fabians, as we will soon see, were exploring a similar strategy, he unveiled, under the revealing title 'Socialist Imperialism', a happy wedding of the two ideals:

The distinction between Socialist Imperialism and the other sort is that our aim is, not to filch from our neighbours, but to benefit them; not to increase international rancour by taking advantage of weaker States, but to promote the fraternisation of the peoples by extending to all the advantages we ourselves enjoy ... To develop the world's blessings for the world's benefit, to work unceasingly for the prosperity of the human race even more than for the glorification of our own nation – that is the Imperialism of Socialism.[186]

This startling pronouncement may have resulted from inchoate pro-imperialist strands in the socialist movement. It certainly was a response to the obvious popularity of empire amongst large groups of the electorate. As Herbert Samuel put it in a Rainbow Circle meeting in January 1900, the 'average elector wants men who will maintain the Empire without neglecting Social Reform'. Imperialism *was* popular. Socialism, by and large, was not; if it ever was to be, some accommodation with empire would doubtless prove useful. Thoughtful observers like Beesly believed (in April 1900) that notwithstanding 'many of the Fabians ... the large majority of Socialists

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[185] Thompson. *Blatchford*, p. 155; *Clarion* (11 Nov. 1899), 354.
[186] Alex M. Thompson. *Here I Lie* (1937), p. 159; *Clarion* (25 Nov. 1899), 372.

are zealous against the war'. At the same time, the *Clarion* noted in early 1900 an apparent shift in opinion. Previously 'most Socialists paid little attention to foreign affairs, or to our colonial possessions', being content to 'condemn the Liberal and Tory Governments with regard to the extension of the Empire, to fulminate furiously against the ever-increasing demands for money for the navy and army, and generally to throw cold water on the periodic outbursts of boastfulness about "the greatness of the British Empire and its civilising mission"'. Now, however, the 'Empire is in danger ... We find many Socialists fully supporting the majority of the people in their determination to "see it through",' with many taking the view that the 'Empire being here ... we ought to take adequate means to defend it from aggression'. The writer acknowledged that many socialists were 'just as strong in the opposite direction', and just what the actual balance of opinion was has remained controversial ever since. But another type of socialist, the 'Imperial Expansionist', who believed in the '"destiny" of the British nation to carry the blessings of civilisation to the lower races', had certainly now emerged, though the writer then contended that the logical 'patriotic' defence of such an empire was actually incompatible with socialism.[187]

Blatchford's position on the war was of course prone to misinterpretation. He insisted repeatedly that he did 'not approve of war, I am not in love with Imperialism, and I am strongly in favour of international brotherhood'. His own logic, however, pushed him inexorably towards a stronger imperialist position, if not without the appearance of some inconsistency. 'We possess India. We can do no good by abandoning India,' he put it in 1900; 'what is true of India is equally true of South Africa, of Egypt, of the Soudan ... Here is the Empire. It is ours. There is no reason why we should give it up, or even give up part of it.' Blatchford probably had Bax in mind when he added a year later that not only did 'the workers have a great deal to lose. They have liberty to lose. They have free speech, a free press, and free education to lose,' but also that 'India and Ireland ... would be worse off than any other Government ... England is universally admitted to be the best colonising Power the world has known, and the gentlest and wisest ruler over subject races.' In keeping with this view, Alex Thompson assumed that Britain might foster its own superior cosmopolitanism:

Nothing so much divides the people as 'patriotism'; nothing so tends to keep men in ignorance of each other, and therefore to perpetuate international prejudices, as 'national' differences of tongue and habit. If all men spoke one language, and could

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[187] *Minutes of the Rainbow Circle 1894–1924*, ed. Michael Freeden (1989), pp. 73–4; Ingram Papers, D2808/7/20; *Clarion* (27 Jan. 1900), 30.

feast in common on the best that the world's literature affords, then might they beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nationalities must fuse and merge: it is the Law.[188]

While developing his defence of empire, Blatchford began campaigning for the creation of a citizen army on the grounds that Britain lacked an adequate defensive force. (Amongst the Social Democrats Harry Quelch, following Hyndman, mooted a similar scheme.[189]) Another barrage of criticism followed, with Blatchford responding exasperatedly that he was now attacked as both 'an Imperialist and a Militarist', and complaining that he was 'neither. I am what is called a Little-Englander, and I am and have been all my life an opponent of war … when did I ever write a line in favour of Imperialism? When did I ever write a line in favour of war?' His whole argument, he now maintained, could be expressed in a simple proposition:

Whether we Socialists agree or not, the British people *will* insist upon holding the Empire as it stands today. The consequence of this … will be that we must adopt some form of Militarism. If we adopt a form of Militarism, it will be wise to adopt the best form and reject the worst. Conscription is the worst … I believe that for purposes of foreign service we need an army of regular troops, but for purposes of home defence we need an army of volunteers – an army of citizen soldiers.[190]

How much support for such views was there in Blatchford's circle? 'All except myself', amongst his own staff, he confessed in 1901, 'have repeatedly spoken in favour of the Boers since the war began.' His defence of empire met with considerable opposition from other socialists, including the 'emphatic repudiation' of the SDF's executive. Some argued that by 1910 he was 'not a Socialist at all but an Imperialist', and that his advocacy of a militia was part of a wider policy to 'feed our young men when they most require it, [to] relieve the pressure on the labour market, and, above all, ensure the safety of the British Empire'.[191]

Isolated to some degree, Blatchford none the less garnered assistance from other quarters. The former Socialist League secretary H. Halliday Sparling contributed two articles to the *Clarion* in May 1900, 'An Apology for the British Empire', which contended that the empire could help 'bring us to Humanity', and 'The Rise of Imperialism', which described the movement as 'organic, substantive, growing by its own inherent force

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[188] *Clarion* (3 Mar. 1900), 69; (13 July 1901), 1; (3 Jan. 1902), 4.
[189] *Clarion* (10 Feb. 1900), 47. See Harry Quelch. *Social-Democracy and the Armed Nation* (1907).
[190] *Clarion* (28 Apr. 1900), 129–30; (28 Apr. 1900), 129–30. See generally Hugh Cunningham. *The Volunteer Force … 1859–1908* (1975), p. 103.
[191] *Clarion* (13 July 1901), 1; Lee. *Social Democracy*, p. 208, and generally pp. 194–201; *The Socialist* (Feb. 1910), 4.

from roots that reach back to the English Bible and Shakespeare'. There was useful aid from abroad, too, with Karl Liebknecht agreeing that 'at present India without England would be unable to preserve her independence against Russia'. The *Clarion* faithfully reported both Bernard Shaw's defence of the conflict, and the Fabians' aspiration to 'spread, perfect, regulate, and finally annex' the capitalist system of organisation, including the empire.[192] In fact, as we will shortly see, the *Clarion*'s call to arms had in some respects prepared the ground for Shaw's 1900 campaign to lead the Fabians out of the wilderness and towards a vastly expanded New Jerusalem.

Between the Boer War and 1914 Blatchford became obsessed by the 'German menace' to 'the existence of the Empire'. His insistence that 'universal military training would be the salvation of the British race' provoked frequent consternation in the movement. With Hyndman and Harrison, he repeatedly warned that Germany was preparing to attack Britain. Blatchford now praised patriotism as 'a sentiment at once tender and sound', and expressed support for the monarchy at the same time, even praising the Prince of Wales as having 'done well for the Empire'. So too he asked readers not to 'harken to the lisping renegades who champion our enemies' and taught that 'to love England is a sin'. He rejected their complaints 'of capitalists and armament rings and secret diplomacy and the solidarity of nations'. Nor was he beyond challenging the by-then orthodox account of empire, noting after the First World War that it had not been 'armament profiteers and financial gamblers' but 'the ambition of Germany to conquer Europe' that had caused the conflict.[193]

Blatchford's position on the empire thus remained unchanged after the Boer War: he was opposed in principle, but increasingly supported it in practice. In 1904 he reiterated that

I am quite willing that we should give up India and Africa, and Malta, and Gibraltar, and all the other foreign possessions, and that we should grant self-government to Ireland ... But it would be difficult, and it would be dangerous ... My own idea is that the British people should put themselves in a position to defend their country and their colonies, and at the same time, by diplomacy, by propaganda, by treaties, arbitration courts and alliances should do all in their power to come to equitable arrangements with the other nations and to foster international friendship and universal peace.

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[192] *Clarion* (5 May 1900), 141; (12 May 1900), 149; (2 June 1900), 170; (30 June 1900), 201.
[193] Blatchford. *Germany and England* (1911), pp. 2, 34; Blatchford. *Stunts*, pp. 192, 194, 197–8; Blatchford. *As I Lay A-Thinking* (1926), p. 48.

Yet elsewhere he was more unequivocal, writing that the 'break-up of the British Empire would be a crime. The Empire can stand; the race is sound. The English can right their wrongs and cure their own life.' Supporters like Harry Roberts agreed that the 'British Empire, with all its faults, is probably the finest instrument for the furtherance of real liberty and justice and humanity at present available in the world.' Alex Thompson, too, continued to promote a fusion of imperialism and socialism, writing after a Far East tour in 1910 that an 'Imperialism which represents a united world means Socialism ... it is good citizenship and good Socialism by all means to hold fast to the Empire.'[194]

Though the *Clarion*'s circulation dropped from 90,000 to 10,000 because of its support for war in 1914, for some of Blatchford's followers its course seemed to fuel the belief that the empire might well prove crucial to the post-war world order. 'The Empire After the War' would emerge 'palpable and glorious', R. B. Suthers contended in 1916:

When the war broke out we suddenly realised that something existed that had never existed before ... The British Commonwealth was born at last. Imperial unity had been achieved in a flash. Henceforth there can be no question of disruption or separation. Our problem after the war is simply the discovery of the best methods of maturing and developing the new world State, to be known as the British Commonwealth.[195]

THE FABIANS, THEIR FRIENDS, SOME ALLIES AND MALCONTENTS

The longest-lived of all the offshoots of late nineteenth-century British socialism, the Fabian Society, also took the strongest pro-imperial line of any branch of the movement.[196] Yet amongst the 174 Fabian Tracts published between 1884 and 1914 virtually none addressed the empire.[197] None of the original *Fabian Essays* (1889) tackled foreign or imperial policy as such. The Fabian journalist and Positivist William Clarke did condemn Britain's 'nefarious aggression in Egypt' in 1882, citing the 'extension of English trade to new markets' as the cause of imperial adventurism. But, as Porter has indicated, few other Fabians prior to 1900 took extra-European developments very seriously. Imperial issues were broadly subsumed under

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[194] *Clarion* (30 Sep. 1904), 1; (28 Apr. 1911), 5; (29 Apr. 1910), 5.
[195] Thompson. *Here I Lie*, p. 156; *Clarion* (7 Jan. 1916), 3; (9 June 1916), 1.
[196] Previous accounts of the development of its views on imperialism include Porter. *Critics*, pp. 109–23.
[197] An exception is S. S. Thorburn. *Problems of Indian Poverty* (1902), which saw the 'general charge' of the 'drain' as an 'exaggerated truth' (pp. 3–7).

the proposition that, as an 1896 report put it, 'the only possible guarantee for the peace of the world lies in the consolidation of the interests of the most advanced States on a Social-Democratic basis'.[198]

The Fabian Society thus managed to avoid any imperialist entanglements until the Boer War, when a debate revealed both pro- and anti-imperial elements. Led by the Ulster Quaker-bred S. G. Hobson, whose nationalist sympathies were indebted to John Mitchel and Mazzini, the latter substantial minority group (whose most 'formidable supporter' was Sydney Olivier) in December 1899 blamed 'the phase of Imperialist passion that has overrun this country of recent years' as 'the chief cause of the war'. It denounced the 'sinister co-operation between professional financiers and the military power' which threatened to establish 'militarism as the predominant element in our public life and the paramountcy of the interests that withstand the advance of Socialism'. Yet even this rejection of 'the Imperialism of Capitalism and vainglorious Nationalism' was mitigated by a pledge 'to support the expansion of the Empire only in so far as that may be compatible with the expansion of that higher social organization which this Society was founded to promote'.[199] Writing on 'Imperialism: a Socialist View' at the end of 1899, S. G. Hobson contended that if imperialism meant acquiring 'influence over the races of the world in consequence of the Anglo-Saxon capacity for barter and for Colonial administration, then surely we are all imperialists'. Cobden and Bright had 'failed to foresee that so long as our foreign and Colonial trade remained unrestricted and without Government control, the nation would be subjected to constant pressure by land grabbers whose interests would finally coincide with militarism'. Thus it was necessary to

consolidate and organize other races in the Socialist sense, that is to say, unless we can eliminate the private exploiter, I think it better for this nation to contract rather than to expand. But I look to strengthening and not weakening our national influence abroad by extending our official representatives and placing under their control our business interests. No one can set a limit to humanitarian development on these lines.[200]

If this was the less imperialist Fabian approach to the crisis, George Bernard Shaw at a large public meeting in late February 1900 announced

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[198] George Bernard Shaw, ed. *Fabian Essays in Socialism* (1889), p. 82; Porter. *Critics*, p. 109; *Report on Fabian Policy* (1896), p. 12. See also Semmel. *Free Trade Imperialism*, ch. 6.
[199] Hobson. *Pilgrim to the Left*, pp. 63–5, 79, 88. The debate is reprinted in C. E. M. Joad, ed. *Shaw and Society* (1953), pp. 137–40.
[200] *LL* (16 Dec. 1899), 396.

an expanded vision of Fabianism which was still more enthusiastic about empire. Every 'Fabian was necessarily an Imperialist', he proclaimed, because the more efficient development of imperial resources might promote 'the further integration of the communities constituting the empire'.[201] Shaw audaciously asserted that the Fabian Society single-handedly had transformed both British socialism and British imperialism. Before Fabianism, 'Socialism was saturated with Militarism: it preached "the class war" and armed revolution. The Fabians succeeded in eliminating this sanguinary element, and made Socialism possible for the ordinary peaceful citizen.' Fabianism promoted 'a sense of the supreme importance of the Duties of the Community with State Organization, Efficient Government, Industrial Civil Service, Regulation of all private enterprise in the common interest, and dissolution of frontiers through international industrial organization'. Shaw also asserted that 'Imperial Federation was an inevitable deduction from these new views. To ignore this, and ascribe it, instead, to the Jingoes, was mere perversity of political partizanship . . . The change, then, is *our* change. For good or evil, it is we who have made England Imperialist.' Moreover, Shaw insisted that the day of the small, unincorporated nation and the stateless people had passed. Empires needed to continue to expand 'until the frontiers of the civilized states are coterminous'. National self-determination was consequently now outdated; and Shaw's native Ireland, too, needed to incorporate itself into a progressive imperial framework. Socialist cosmopolitanism, then, was to reign supreme. The Labour Party, Shaw would stress in 1920, 'must not . . . be expected to display the enthusiasm for Nationalism and the complete preoccupation with it which naturally mark the Irish parties'. The party, 'being federalist and internationalist, is not concerned with nations except as units of organization for Labour throughout the world. It opposes the present misgovernment of Ireland solely because it is an obstacle to the union of the British and Irish workers.' Consequently its policy was to be one of 'Home Rule All Round and Federal Union'.[202]

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[201] *Fabian News* (Mar. 1900), 2. See Fred D. Schneider. 'Fabians and the Utilitarian Idea of Empire', *RP*, 35 (1973), 501–22, and Thompson. 'The Language of Imperialism and the Meanings of Empire'.

[202] *Fabian News* (Mar. 1900), 1, 3; George Bernard Shaw. *Irish Nationalism and Labour Internationalism* (1920), pp. 5, 14, 9. See Gareth Griffith. *Socialism and Superior Brains. The Political Thought of Bernard Shaw* (1993), p. 198, and Archibald Henderson. *Bernard Shaw. Playboy and Prophet* (New York, 1932), p. 575. On the context see also Royden Harrison. *The Life and Times of Sidney and Beatrice Webb* (2000), pp. 308–41, and Bernard Porter. 'Fabians, Imperialists, and the International Order', in Ben Pimlott, ed., *Fabian Essays in Socialist Thought* (1984), pp. 54–67. For earlier socialist opposition to Irish nationalism, see, e.g., E. J. Lamel's 'The Futility of Irish Nationalism', *The British Socialist* (1912), 71.

A major outcome of this debate was the tract edited by Shaw entitled *Fabianism and the Empire* (1900), which was extensively commented on within the Society. It has been described as the 'original socialist view of empire as the foundation of a "commonwealth of nations" (a term he may have coined)',[203] though we have just seen that the *Clarion* in fact had developed a similar line in late 1899. Ever the dramatist, Shaw described his 'masterpiece' as 'extra-ultra-hyper-imperialist'. The pamphlet extolled a 'British Empire, wisely governed' as 'invincible'.[204] It proposed an increasing Indianization of the Indian Civil Service, and the gradual development of institutions of self-government, through more efficient administration, 'brains and political science', in other parts of the empire, with one end being to protect native populations against European depredations. It also urged an investigation of the 'social causes' of famine in India, though other Fabians more fatalistically concluded that 'the economic drain exists … and is inevitable'. For South Africa, the question of the hour, protecting the natives was again mooted, as well as various measures of responsible government. The tract struck an unabashedly optimistic note respecting international progress through 'higher civilisation'. It asserted that it was unnecessary to protest against 'purely piratical conquests of weaker States', since

The value of a State to the world lies in the quality of its civilization, not in the magnitude of its armaments … The State which obstructs international civilization will have to go, be it big or little. That which advances it should be defended by all the Western Powers. Thus huge China and little Monaco may share the same fate, little Switzerland and the vast United States the same fortune.

Respecting China, where another bloody war was being fought, a particularly belligerent note was struck: the West had 'international rights of travel and trade, with the right to settled government which they involve'. But 'with these the present institutions of the Chinese Empire are incompatible; and these institutions, accordingly, must go. If the Chinese themselves cannot establish order in our sense, the Powers must establish it for them.'[205]

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[203] Griffith. *Socialism*, p. 65. Shaw certainly did not coin the term, which was used much earlier (e.g., Charles Buxton. *The Ideas of the Day on Policy*, 1866, p. 85). Porter asserts that the 'socialist "Commonwealth"' was 'Sidney Webb's new word' (in Pimlott, ed., *Fabian Essays*, p. 55). But Bax had used this phrase in *The Religion of Socialism* (p. 160) and Besant in 1887 (*Is Socialism Sound?*, 1887, p. 110).

[204] Shaw. *Collected Letters 1898–1910* (1972), p. 182; Shaw, ed. *Fabianism and the Empire* (1900), p. 15.

[205] *Fabian News* (Feb. 1902), 5; Shaw, ed. *Fabianism*, pp. 46–8. Shaw was also prepared to view the aggression upon China as 'part of a series of inevitable wars for the establishment of an international

Support was lent to Shaw's new view in 1901 by Sidney Webb, whose Fabian tract *Twentieth Century Politics: a Policy of National Efficiency* (1901) announced

the maintenance, as against all external aggression, of that great commonwealth of peoples styled the British Empire) including within itself members of all races, of all human colors, and nearly all languages and religions ... Our obvious duty with the British Empire is, not to 'run' it for our own profit, or with any idea of imposing Anglo-Saxondom on a reluctant world, but to put our best brains into the task of so organizing it ... to promote the maximum individual development of each geographical unit within its bounds.

Webb would eventually extend this vision to disallow 'any part of the earth to be open, without governmental control of some sort, to the private trader, the unchartered adventurer, or even the missionary ... any more than for the exploitation of the wage-earners of the different parts of the Empire by its capitalists'. We see, then, that an intimate connection could be established between Fabian collectivism and Fabian socialist imperialism; to Patrick Geddes, 'the militarist organisation applied to [the] state gives us bureaucracy and administration', and indeed, 'the difference between an imperialist and a socialist is only the difference between tweedledum and tweedledee'. The Webbs' project thus aimed simply to achieve 'perfection in the adaptation of the political order to the theological and military on the one hand and the industrial scientific on the other'.[206]

Despite this outburst of cosmopolitan enthusiasm in 1900–1, the Fabians would eventually agree on Home Rule for not only Ireland but also England, Scotland and Wales if requested. An imperial parliament would oversee common questions like foreign policy for the 'Britannic Alliance'. But the Fabians extended little sympathy to either 'backward' or small nations, or nationalism as such.[207] Sidney Webb rejected as mere vestiges of 'early Victorian nationalism' both the Irish and Boer claims of a right to independence. He condemned

that favourite Fenian abstraction, the 'principle of nationality', [which] now appears to us but Individualism writ large, being, in truth, the assertion that each distinct race, merely because it thinks itself a distinct race (which it never is, by the way), has an inherent right to have its own government, and work out its own

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level of civilization' in which it was necessary to demonstrate 'the superiority of British civilization to the civilizations that come in conflict with it' (quoted in J. Percy Smith. *The Unrepentant Pilgrim ... Bernard Shaw*, 1966, p. 154).

[206] Sidney Webb. *Twentieth Century Politics: a Policy of National Efficiency* (1901), pp. 5–6; *New Statesman* (2 Aug. 1913); Geddes Papers, NLS, MS. 10616, ff. 111, 119; Branford Papers, VB240.

[207] A later generation of Fabians would back away from this position; see, e.g., G. D. H. Cole. *Fabian Socialism* (1943), pp. 103–4.

policy, unfettered by any consideration of the effect of this independence on other races, or on the world at large.

Thus, concluded Webb, Fabianism had nothing 'to do with obsolete hypocrisies about peoples "rightly struggling to be free"'.[208]

There was, however, some dissent from this perspective. Some Fabians, like G. K. Chesterton, reacted against Webb's view by insisting that 'a high degree of intolerance of the disadvantages heaped upon the weak' made the socialist outlook fundamentally incompatible with imperialism.[209] But in the next major Fabian publication on the empire, *White Capital and Coloured Labour* (1906), Sydney Olivier offered further support for acquiring economic advantages throughout the world by 'advanced' countries. This he based upon 'the unanswerable claim of the white man that he has a right to go where he can live', and 'his reasonable conviction that if he has admission to these territories he can by his productive and agricultural arts enable them to maintain and enrich both himself and the native'. Later Olivier also addressed the issue of how the League of Nations should deal with 'primitive peoples'. Here he reiterated that there could 'be no reasonable question of locking up these sources of wealth because certain barbarous tribes, as the result of migrations of centuries, are found in this age sparsely inhabiting the countries which can produce them'. 'Freedom of access to and exploitation of these natural resources' was 'now generally recognized as a common right of mankind'. The duties of the League, he insisted, included protecting native land rights, restricting contract labour and maintaining 'respect for tribal authority, law, and customs, wherever possible', with oversight by the existing sovereign European power 'enforceable through appeal to the Court of the League'. Later in life he would return to the subject of Africa again.[210]

The Fabian embrace of imperialism also inevitably involved the Society in the ongoing controversy over whether imperial preference entailed protective tariffs. There was nothing particularly unusual in this. Throughout the preceding century the labour movement had flirted with protectionism, with Chartists like J. B. Leno, for instance, upholding free trade in some raw materials but tariffs on 'all manufactured articles that needed protection'. Marx thought an independent Ireland might rightly embrace protectionism for its newly re-established industries. In 1902 a

[208] Sidney Webb. 'Lord Rosebery's Escape from Houndsditch', *NC*, 50 (1901), 367, 371–2.
[209] Quoted in Schneider. 'Fabians and the Utilitarian Idea of Empire', 519.
[210] Sydney Olivier. *White Capital and Coloured Labour* (1906), p. 135; Olivier. *The League of Nations and Primitive Peoples* (Oxford, 1918), pp. 6, 13; Olivier. *The Anatomy of African Misery* (1927).

collection of articles examined the issue, with John Burns presenting a Labour argument favouring free trade.[211] In *Fabianism and the Fiscal Question* (1904), the Fabians manifested their willingness to support 'the subordination of commercial enterprise to national ends'. Shaw even insisted that 'in these matters Socialism is in these respects ultra-Protectionist', while denying that taxes on imports were consequently desirable. The work thus favoured a socialist interpretation of free trade and of an international division of labour, and rejected 'the ideal of perfect independence and self-sufficiency, whether for individuals or nations' as 'absurd beyond all reasonable tolerance'. The implications of the tract, however, caused Graham Wallas, amongst others, to leave the Society, though he shared Shaw's views on the inevitability of imperial expansion. Blatchford also supported protection, though the ILP attacked him for it.[212]

The Fabians, then, went well beyond the grudging, somewhat reluctant imperialism of a Blatchford to embrace a socialist civilisational mission conducted with methodical efficiency. What can we say about the sources of Fabian socialist imperialism? It has been suggested that, beyond its cultural Eurocentrism, racialist and eugenicist tendencies in the society underpinned its 'social imperialism',[213] with Sidney Webb in particular starkly warning that the 'ultimate future of these islands may be to the Chinese!'[214] The Webbs have thus been accused of falling victim to a 'crude social Darwinism' where race was concerned, though the charge – also incorporating H. G. Wells's views in the eugenic moment of his *Anticipations* (1901) – has also been disputed.[215]

None the less the most influential Fabian colonial administrator, Sydney Olivier, certainly took a very Positivist and much more anti-racist view of

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[211] J. B. Leno. *The Aftermath* (1892), p. 19; Cronin. *Marx & the Irish Question*, p. 26; John Burns. 'Political Dangers of Protection', in H. W. Massingham, ed., *Labour and Protection* (1903), pp. 1–37.

[212] *Fabianism and the Fiscal Question* (1904), pp. 3, 13; Martin J. Wiener. *Between Two Worlds. The Political Thought of Graham Wallas* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 57, 106; *ILP News* (Oct. 1903), 4. Shaw wrote to Burns that 'being a Socialist, I am a Protectionist right down to my boots' (quoted in Porter. *Critics*, p. 113).

[213] Gordon K. Lewis. *Slavery, Imperialism and Freedom* (New York, 1978), p. 258.

[214] Sidney Webb. *The Decline in the Birth Rate* (1907), p. 17. Webb regarded the Chinese as a 'Non-Adult' race where a capacity for self-defence and self-government was concerned (*New Statesman*, 2 Aug. 1913).

[215] Jay Winter. *Socialism and the Challenge of War* (1974), p. 44. See Winter. 'The Webbs and the Non-White World: a Case of Socialist Racialism', *JCH*, 9 (1974), 181–92, George Watson. *Politics and Literature in Modern Britain* (1977), p. 132, and Paul B. Rich. *Race and Empire in British Politics*, p. 225. Beatrice Webb certainly was not shy of imputing 'inferiority of race' to American non-whites: see *Beatrice Webb's American Diary 1898*, ed. David A. Shannar (Madison, 1963), p. 39. For eugenics, see Semmel. *Free Trade Imperialism*, pp. 51–2.

this issue. As an abbreviated Rainbow Circle meeting reported it, he insisted that

Race is simply a method in wh: life & energy have manifested themselves. There is no evidence of design in race differences. All men have fundamental identity: their distinctions have been caused by the conditions into wh: life has forced them. Conquered races are sometimes more spiritual & artistic than their conquerors, and savage races have sometimes a higher code of conduct in certain departments than civilized proletariats. If one man has command over the services of another of the same race he often abuses it, & the dangers are enhanced by racial differences.

Olivier also firmly believed that great progress could be demonstrated in the behaviour of non-whites where 'the continuous application to the race of the theory of humanity and equality' had occurred. While Governor of Jamaica, he contributed a paper on 'The Government of Colonies and Dependencies' to the 1911 Universal Races Conference. This asserted that in the slave-settled colonies the 'principle on which the government in relation to the less advanced race is based, is to aim at an education and evolution in European civilisation and political methods'. In other colonies with large numbers of natives, notably in Africa, Olivier conceded, there was

less and less tendency to regard the colonising country as being under any religious obligation to interfere with polygamy, or other such native customs repugnant to British standards of civilisation and morality, and there is more and more a tendency to maintain and reinforce the authority of the local institutions of Government and Justice.

This meant that

the principal aim of British government in these territories is to strengthen and stimulate the characteristic native life of the people, whilst at the same time creating in them a desire for commodities which can be produced by the mother country, and improving their efficiency in the growth and preparation of those products.

But Olivier also acknowledged that where problems of native labour supply existed, 'the more easy-going, non-interventionist policy which is convenient for the wide territories of the later annexations and protectorates tends to become obsolete, and a more frankly self-interested policy is acknowledged and put into execution'. This resulted in 'a supersession of native institutions and customs accompanied by a practical denial of equal political capacity in the non-European race, and the adoption of a policy of tutelage and education in regard to it before admitting it to complete political franchise'. It also meant that 'it is hardly possible to avoid the evolution of an industrial policy tending to impose the European standard of industry

and energy upon the non-white population'. None the less, pressed to express his view as to what a more ideal policy actually should consist of, Olivier averred that

whatever may be the case with Asiatics, African peoples generally are not at all suited by temperament or talent for that kind of industrial position as wage-workers under capital into which the proletariats of industrial European countries have come, nor does it appear to me at all desirable that they should, if they can avoid it, pass into that position or acquire in all respects the characteristics of the European wage-worker.

Thus given 'the great counter-attractions of indolence and sensuality that are continually pressing upon the youth of all tropical populations', Olivier concluded,

Wherever the native has unrestricted access to land, and is in other respects free from economic compulsion, all that a progressive government imposed from without can do is to offer him and coax him to take advantage of the opportunities of agricultural and technical education, and strive by every possible means to stimulate and train his intelligence to perceive their advantages. This is, in fact, the principal aim of modern progressive statesmanship in all colonies and dependencies inhabited by a mixture of races.[216]

But if racism was not a major underlying cause of the Fabians' embrace of imperialism, an ideal of expanded national efficiency certainly was. Here a key influence was the economist W. S. Hewins, who had known the Webbs since at least 1894, and who helped found the London School of Economics. Hewins had become convinced by the early 1890s that a laissez-faire approach to imperialism had had its day, and sought inspiration in various forms of pre-Smithian mercantilism or a German 'national system of economics' or *Zollverein*. His conclusion was that the empire could be revivified by creating 'an industrial and commercial state in which by encouragement or restraint imposed by the sovereign authority, private and sectional interests should be made to promote national strength and efficiency'. In his well-publicised lectures to the Fabian Society in late 1898 on 'Imperial Policy in Relation to the Social Question', Hewins insisted upon 'the consolidation and organisation of the British Empire in such a manner that all classes of industry reached the maximum state of efficiency'. Imperialism could thus promote rather than retard social reform in Britain itself:

[216] *Minutes of the Rainbow Circle*, p. 147; Sydney Olivier. *Letters and Selected Writings* (1948), p. 194; G. Spiller. *Proceedings of the First Universal Races Congress*, pp. 293–311, here pp. 296–8, 300–1.

For the sake of the Empire we must put an end to our own industrial conflicts; organized employers and federated trades unions must give place to the regulation of wages and conditions of labor by the State. So only can we secure that the men needed for the Empire shall have precedence of private wealth.[217]

Some Fabians welcomed this view immediately. In discussion Hubert Bland 'defended a system of colonial expansion by England on the grounds that if she did not make use of her opportunities in this direction other countries would oust her; and that England was the only country fit to pioneer the blessings of civilisation'.[218] Six months later, lecturing on the 'Economic Implications of Imperialism', Hewins again distinguished between laissez-faire and 'Imperial regulation'. He did not succeed in persuading all Fabians, however; Olivier was noted as disagreeing with his defence of British foreign policy at a Society meeting in late 1899.[219]

Such expansive aims did, however, appeal to another ambitious reformer still on the fringes of the Society (to which he belonged from 1903 to 1908), the writer H. G. Wells. Wells would later describe the new ideal as the product of 'men convinced of their own superior common-sense [who] assumed that the division of the whole planet amongst a small number of imperialisms, each under the leadership of a Great Power, was destined to be rapidly completed'. The promoter of a 'Great State' ideal which inherited some aspects of Comte's internationalism, Wells became amongst the most influential British collectivist writers in the first half of the twentieth century. He later described himself as having been, at the time of the Boer War, a 'strong imperialist'. By the early 1930s he claimed that 'I am now an anti-imperialist; but my case is that it is imperialism which has changed, and not I', because

It was conceivable then that with an intellectual vigour and a frankness, patience, and generosity it has altogether failed to produce, it might, in co-operation with other liberal powers, or at least with one other great liberal power, have become the precursor and framework of a real world system.[220]

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[217] W. S. Hewins. *The Apologia of an Imperialist* (2 vols., 1929), vol. I, pp. 24, 35; *LL* (10 Dec. 1898), 407; *Fabian News* (Dec. 1898), 37.

[218] *LL* (10 Dec. 1898), 407. Bland had been a critic some years earlier of Hyndman's description of the results of British rule in India (*LL*, 14 Nov. 1905, 407).

[219] *LL* (10 June 1899), 181; (4 Nov. 1899), 346.

[220] H. G. Wells. *Experiment in Autobiography* (2 vols., 1934), vol. I, p. 260; Wells. *After Democracy* (1932), p. 102. While J. D. Beresford described Wells as 'entirely uninfluenced by the writings of Comte' (*H. G. Wells*, 1915, p. 17), this can be questioned. Wells described Comte's 'Western Republic' as 'the first Utopia that involved the synthesis of numerous States' (*A Modern Utopia*, 1905, p. 327), and acknowledged 'his one meritorious gift to the world' (*An Englishman Looks at the World*, 1914, p. 205). Wells elsewhere admitted that he was probably 'unjust to Comte' because of 'a real personal dislike' which was 'part of an inherent dislike of leadership and a still profounder

At the time of the Fabians' embrace of imperialism Wells's main contribution to the debate was in *Anticipations* (1901). This hoped for the creation of 'a great federation of white English-speaking peoples',

having America north of Mexico as its central mass . . . its federal government will sustain a common fleet, and protect or dominate or actually administer most or all of the non-white states of the present British Empire, and in addition much of the South and Middle Pacific, the East and West Indies, the rest of America, and the larger part of black Africa.

The 'New Republic' thus emerging, 'a world-state with a common language and a common rule', would, Wells thought, cultivate 'efficients' amongst the world's races, if need be by eugenic policies designed to 'make the multiplication of those who fall behind a certain standard of social efficiency unpleasant and difficult'.[221] Though Wells would retreat quickly from this eugenicist orientation, he was still considered by many socialists prior to the First World War as broadly to be classed essentially among the socialist imperialists. His *Mankind in the Making* (1911), for instance, was accused by the Social Democrats of giving a puff to 'that latter-day general specific "Imperialism"', and expressing 'the expansionist aims and ideals proper to modern financial capitalism'.[222]

By the end of the First World War, however, Wells had concluded that the League of Nations should not only end German imperialism, but equally 'wind up British imperialism and French imperialism'. Taking a leaf from Hobson, as we will see, he counselled the 'international control of tropical Africa'. But he did not recommend '*abrogating existing sovereignties in Africa*', emphasising that what was 'contemplated is a delegation of authority'. Undeveloped areas, he insisted in 1924, could only be administered by a federal body, before the creation of which 'there is nothing for us to do but to go on holding these possessions of the third order, without trading discrimination or settlement discrimination, against any other race or people'.[223] In later years Wells retreated still further from imperialist sentiments. In 1928 he wrote that 'ripening experience has corroded my Imperialism (of 1899–1900) profoundly, and perhaps incurably', the reason being that then the 'Empire was seen as the pacific precursor of a practical

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objection to the subsequent deification of leaders' (*Experiment*, vol. I, pp. 658–9). The Positivists had no difficulty claiming that Wells was 'largely a follower of Comte' (Philip Thomas. *A Religion of this World*, 1913, p. 16).

[221] Wells. *Anticipations of . . . Mechanical and Scientific Progress* (1902), pp. 260–1, 315–16. Hobson, too, would support such policies, e.g., in *Free-Thought in the Social Sciences* (1926), pp. 155–6.

[222] *Justice* (10 Oct. 1903), 1.

[223] Wells. *An Englishman Looks at the World*, p. 39; Wells. *In the Fourth Year* (1918), pp. 40, 48; Wells. *A Year of Prophesying* (1924), p. 50.

world State. Our "raw material" possessions were seen as part of the common estate of the human race, our share in a trusteeship; our Navy as a world police that might be at last as denationalised as the Knights Templars.' Wells now regretted that the empire 'did not seem to me to be realising the wide and generous dreams of the liberal imperialism with which the century began', though he still felt that the 'British Empire is not a thing to destroy; it is a thing to rescue.' In 1934 he proposed

not a surrender of sovereignty nor a direct 'international control' of tropical Africa, but the setting up of an overruling board composed of delegates from the powers concerned: Frenchman, Englishman, Africander, Portuguese, Belgian, Italian and (ultimately) German, to which certain functions can be delegated, as powers are delegated to the government of the United States of America by those states.

By 1939 he was writing that 'I think the British Empire has outlived its usefulness. But the consolidation of the English-speaking people as the vehicle of a world civilisation is quite another matter, and a matter of great urgency.'[224]

Another individual at the margins of the Fabian Society, but equally of considerable long-term influence, was Annie Besant. By all accounts the most powerful female orator of her day,[225] Besant (1847–1933) was led from a radicalism she increasingly found 'too separative and individualistic' towards a socialism which 'had so much more of the idea of a common effort and a common aim ... and encouraged a fuller self-sacrifice'. Hyndman's confrontation with her republican and secularist associate Charles Bradlaugh assisted in this conversion. A subsequent conviction of 'the inadequacy of Materialism to explain the facts of consciousness' then pushed Besant towards Theosophy, and another distinctive anti-imperialist position.[226]

Besant's writing on empire commenced with several articles in the *National Reformer* on 'England, India, and Afghanistan' in late 1878 attacking the 'brutalising imperialism' of British policy.[227] She was well acquainted with the Positivist critique of empire, which was often advertised in the paper.[228] Besant recognised that India could not simply be

[224] Wells. *The Way the World is Going* (1928), pp. 74, 118, 120; Wells. *Experiment*, vol. II, pp. 712–13; Wells. *The Fate of Homo Sapiens* (1939), p. 328.

[225] See Hyndman. *Further Reminiscences*, p. 7.

[226] Annie Besant. *An Autobiography* (2nd edn, 1893), pp. 301–2; James Adderley. *The Parson in Socialism* (1910), p. 175.

[227] *NR* (20 Oct. 1878), 242ff. See Mark Bevir. 'In Opposition to the Raj: Annie Besant and the Dialectic of Empire', *HPT*, 19 (1998), 61–77.

[228] E.g., *NR* (14 Dec. 1879), 813.

relinquished immediately, however. Instead she urged that Indians be trained to self-government by being promoted in the administration. But she opposed the re-establishment of the native states, contending instead that power should pass 'into the hands of the Indian people, so that a mighty self-governing nation should slowly arise from the ashes of the dead native and foreign despotism'.[229] In 1881 Besant led the National Secular Society to denounce the annexation of the Transvaal. The following year she protested against the invasion of Egypt, complaining that

We have commenced a war to enforce a foreign yoke on a people striving to break it; to crush back into slavery a nation trying to shake it off; to stifle the aspirations of a race awakening into national life; to re-establish a despotism over a community endeavouring to create a system of self-government.[230]

Besant joined the Fabian Society and announced her conversion to socialism in mid-1885. That year she also attacked Gordon, accusing him of tolerating slavery.[231] Her move to Theosophy was prompted in part by her wish to promote 'universal brotherhood', and sympathetic socialists recognised that Besant's was 'an attempt to retranslate Christianity in terms of Hinduism, to create a universal religion by alliance rather than conversion or fusion'. Others, however, more caustically alleged that Besant's outlook was 'adapted to please Indian nationalists, since it rests on unbounded admiration of their old sacred books, and tends to justify everything there which seems ridiculous, vulgar, or obscene'.[232]

Besant moved to India in 1895, where, having passed from atheism to pantheism, she attempted to reconcile Theosophy and Hinduism, in part at least to effect an undermining of the belief in the superiority of the white races.[233] Eventually she became President of the Indian National Congress.[234] Her starting-point now was almost invariably the assertion that 'almost everything which can be learned from Christianity exists also in the eastern faiths'.[235]

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[229] *NR* (15 Dec. 1878), 370, reprinted as *England, India, and Afghanistan* (1879).

[230] *NR* (20 Feb. 1881), 147; (3 Sep. 1882), 163–4.

[231] *Justice* (1 Aug. 1885), 1; Besant. *Gordon Judged Out of his Own Mouth* (1885), p. 11; Besant, *The Story of the Soudan* (1884), p. 78.

[232] Besant. *Why I Became a Theosophist* (1889), pp. 7, 14; *Socialist Review* (July 1913), 390; Joseph Chailley. *Administrative Problems of British India* (1910), p. 66.

[233] Annie Besant. *The Case for India* (1917), p. 27. The Theosophical Society had been founded in New York in 1875, and was led by Helena Blavatsky. Its aims, notably the creation of 'a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour' (Besant. *An Introduction to Theosophy*, 1895), were not dissimilar to those of the Positivists.

[234] Amongst the later writings, see *The Case for India* and *Home Rule and the Empire* (Madras, 1917).

[235] Besant. *England and India* (Benares, 1902), p. 3, and generally Besant. *The Means of India's Regeneration* (1895).

Like Blunt, and in many respects the Positivists, Besant thus relied on a 'spiritual awakening' to underpin nascent nationalist movements. Having advocated the case for Indian democracy, Besant by 1915 proposed that the village council or Panchayat become the basis of Indian self-government, with all adult males and females electing village councils, then town boards, district boards, provincial parliaments and a national parliament. She also suggested that an Indian assembly might be headed by 'a Prince of the Imperial House'. She claimed to have practised Swadeshi, or the sole use of native produce, long before Gandhi advocated it.[236]

Let us now return to the mainstream Fabian movement, where, in 1901, it was not Wells's or Besant's but Shaw's views on empire which were receiving the lion's share of attention. Was *Fabianism and the Empire* a watershed in Fabian thought? S. G. Hobson thought that it was 'at the present moment very important that a majority of the Fabian Executive should be pledged opponents of an aggressive national policy'. Deputed by the Executive 'to find a modus vivendi between our Jingoes and our Radicals', he found the task difficult.[237] Thirteen members of the Society resigned. Porter has written that while the tract 'was widely regarded as an embarrassment' at the time, its 'main arguments were to pervade the Society's thinking about foreign policy for fifty years', and has seen it as presaging the international government proposals of some leading Fabians during the First World War. Nor for Porter did the new position do any 'real violence' to the basic principles of the Fabians, who 'did not believe in national self-government any more than they believed in individual self-government if that meant the nation's (or the individual's) governing itself in anti-social ways'. Other later historians have also been kinder to *Fabianism and the Empire*, seeing it as more realistic than many analyses.[238]

Contemporary opinion was certainly divided. Though Rosebery was delighted with the pamphlet, on which he congratulated both Shaw and Webb, a chorus of socialist critics derided it as 'desperate nonsense' and 'egregious and mischievous nonsense', and insisted that 'the whole doctrine of "Fabian Imperialism" has been repudiated by Socialists of all schools and of all countries'. *Justice* attacked Shaw's 'pronounced imperialism'. The Christian Socialist Conrad Noel complained that Fabianism shared with

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[236] Besant. *India's Awakening* (Benares, 1909), p. 1; Besant. *England, India, and Afghanistan*, pp. 17, 84; *The Commonweal. A Journal of National Reform* (19 Mar. 1915), 209; Besant. *For India's Uplift* (2nd edn, Madras, 1917), p. 162; Besant. *Coercion and Resistance in India* (1919), p. 59.

[237] BLPES, Fabian Society A/7/3; Coll. Misc. 0485.

[238] Porter. 'Fabians, Imperialists, and the International Order', p. 56; Griffith. *Socialism*, p. 69. See, most notably, Leonard Woolf's *International Government* (1916), to which Shaw contributed a preface.

Catholicism 'the same curious confusion of thought between unity and its deadly parody, uniformity'.[239] Some thought the view that 'it is of the essence of Fabianism to be Imperialist' meant that 'the "honest" Anti-Imperialist is pictured as clinging to the ideals of individualist republicanism, non-interference, and nationalism. That is to say, Mr Shaw falls back on the stock politics of the *Daily Mail*.'[240]

How then should we classify the Shavian position? It was clearly not 'imperialist' as such, by most standards of contemporary definition. But if not, what terminology is most appropriately applied here? Semmel largely adopts Neumann's language in defining 'social imperialism' as a ruling class strategy of furnishing a mass base for expansionism. He associates this trend with Chamberlain in particular, and places Milner close to some Fabians, as well as linking the latter to the 'Coefficients' dining group, which promoted imperial efficiency. But he does little to contextualise these developments in the light of the wider socialist movement, or to explore possible differences between 'social' and 'socialist' imperialism. Indeed he does not use the latter term at all, preferring 'imperial-socialist' as a designation for Blatchford, though not explicitly applying the epithet to anyone else.[241] Yet these are crucial issues: why Blatchford and not Hyndman or Shaw or Wells? All envisioned using the empire for 'socialist' ends, even if Shaw's scheme for so doing was better thought out, more comprehensive and more insistently presented than Blatchford's or Hyndman's.

To complicate matters, we should also consider Howe's applause for Porter's view that the Fabians 'were imperialists because they did not think foreign affairs mattered to them; hence they were able to barter their support over the South African war to the highest bidder', but also balance this against his challenge to Porter's 'far more questionable … later, more favourable, and somewhat incompatible suggestion that Fabian imperial proposals "were at least *constructive*, capable of supporting definite and detailed policies"'. Evidence for the latter Howe does not see; in particular there is 'total silence on colonial political development'.[242] This ignores the evident possibility that, having begun by ignoring the empire, the Fabians were driven by the Boer War to consider in just such a constructive manner how the empire might serve socialist ends, and vice versa. Their final

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[239] *Socialist Standard* (2 Sep. 1905), 7; *NA* (11 Oct. 1900), 646; *Justice* (28 Apr. 1900), 1; Lucian Oldershaw, ed. *England: A Nation* (1904), p. 237. But two years later Noel wrote of 'strengthening the foundations of our Empire' in the context of the foundation of the Labour Party (*The Labour Party*, p. 147).

[240] *EW* (13 Oct. 1900), 648.　　[241] Semmel. *Free Trade Imperialism*, pp. 13, 64–82, 128–40, 123, 184–5.

[242] Howe. *Anticolonialism*, pp. 36–7.

position on the matter was indisputably 'socialist-imperialist', if we understand by the term a modification of both positions. That is to say, socialism now had a world-wide vision of civilisation, but the means used to effect this were to be very different from the buccaneering imperialism of private capitalism, because enlightened governmental control would effect higher moral ends.

Before turning from the Fabians, we should briefly consider what role Positivism may have played in forming their views of empire. An obvious lineage is evident in the case, already acknowledged, of William Clarke, who came to know both Frederic Harrison and Richard Congreve well in the late 1870s. In 1886 Clarke reviewed the issues surrounding the imperial federation debate, describing its proponents as an alliance of the military, aristocratic and financial interests. Without rejecting empire as such, he noted Harrison's opposition to it 'in the interests of a higher international morality'. He warned that imperialism produced 'endless wars and deeper and deeper complications', and condemned the 'federation' concept as 'in its essence … intended to divert the broad stream of human progress into the narrow channel of English capitalism'.[243] Clarke was also amongst the leading Fabian critics of 'jingoism', defined as 'excess of nationalism'. In 1897, the year he resigned from the Society, he warned that while a century ago 'Europe was cosmopolitan, to-day she is national and particularist'. He insisted that no 'generous forward movement' was 'possible so long as the notion of particular national or even racial interests as against other national or racial interests dominates men's minds, as at the present time'. Against this Clarke proposed that 'if we hold that humanity as such, and not any particular group of humanity, [is] the real object of our affections and its good the real end of our endeavour', it was necessary to renounce the view that 'there is something nobler in being an Englishman than in being a man'. (We will soon see Hobson adopting a very similar view.) Clarke denied, however, that he was 'desirous of seeing national distinctions abolished, and the whole world reduced to one dull uniformity'. He saw this indeed as 'by a singular paradox, just the real ideal of the Jingo, the man who carries nationalism to exaggerated forms'. Instead he emphasised his 'desire to preserve the utmost variety'. His conclusion, unmistakably Positivist, was that

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[243] *William Clarke. A Collection of his Writings*, ed. John Hobson and H. Burrowes (1908), p. xvi; 'An English Imperialist Bubble', in ibid., pp. 76–89, here pp. 77, 82, 89. See Peter Weiler. 'William Clarke: the Making and Unmaking of a Fabian Socialist', *JBS*, 14 (1974–5), 77–108.

a nation is a useful intermediate stage between the family and humanity, and that national ideas must be respected – which is what the Jingo does not hold when it happens to be the ideas of another country. But we also say that a really great movement forward will be known by its international character.

By the century's end Clarke was persuaded that the British empire lacked any 'common economic interests, never had, and never will have', and was tending to autarky. Consequently 'the existing schemes for maintaining England's industrial supremacy' were 'all doomed to failure'. England had been 'the first to develop to mighty proportions the "great industry"' and would be 'the first to lose it … it will surely pass to other lands, which will carry it to proportions scarcely dreamed of yet even by our most eager inventors. We in this island country will retire from the race.' The future of Britain, thus, would not be 'primarily industrial', since, by a process of inexorable organic development, production would pass chiefly to the United States, Japan and China. In a remarkable post-industrial vision – which even included proposing an expansion of foreign student numbers at universities – Clarke imagined that a type of theme-park Britannia might emerge:

England, then, is destined, on this alternate view, to be the pleasure-ground of the English-speaking peoples, the summer resort to which increasing multitudes will repair to find rest and recreation, and to drink in those ancient historic influences so greatly needed by a not very imaginative population living in new countries void of human interest, devoted to daily gain, and dominated by rather commonplace and at times distinctly sordid and vulgar aims.[244]

Besides the obvious case of Clarke, which other Fabians had Positivist leanings? To Royden Harrison it was 'exceedingly difficult to find a Socialist of this period who was quite uninfluenced' by Positivism. Comte's ideas have been associated with both Graham Wallas and Sydney Olivier,[245] partly through Positivism's critique of political economy and its anti-metaphysical empiricism. Wallas certainly conceded with Comte that in any future state 'our benevolence must be not only towards our family or our neighbors, but towards the remotest members of the community'.[246] Olivier, who tutored

[244] Clarke, *Writings*, pp. 108, 111–17, 48–9, 50.
[245] Harrison. *Before the Socialists*, p. 333; Ian Britain. *Fabianism and Culture* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 75, says of both that what gave 'their socialism a distinctly religious tone … was reminiscent of (if not specifically derived from) Comte's "religion of humanity"'. See Francis Lee. *Fabianism and Colonialism. The Life and Political Thought of Lord Sydney Olivier* (1998).
[246] A. M. McBriar. *Fabian Socialism and English Politics 1884–1918* (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 51, 147; *Fabian News* (May 1913), 42. Wright's conclusion is that 'for the Fabians Positivism proved only a transitional stage between liberalism and socialism' (*The Religion of Humanity*, p. 269).

Henry Crompton's children for a time, attended Positivist congregations in the mid-1880s, and according to Gould, tried to interest the Fabians in Comte's social and religious doctrines.[247] He viewed the Positivist critique of rights as important, though he was as sceptical about Comte's expectation of a great advance in human morality as he was of that of the socialists in 1883.[248] Yet this influence, except in the case of Olivier, has usually been read in terms of seeing socialism as a 'religion', rather than as implying a particular view of empire and foreign policy. But in the case of Olivier, employed at the Colonial Office from 1882, we have seen that the agreement that whites had the right to colonise whatever parts of the world they pleased was in fact most un-Positivist, and was possibly partly, as we will see, derived from Hobson.[249]

Finally, what about the Webbs? Willard Wolfe has asserted that 'the doctrines of the Harrisonian Positivists, which were concerned chiefly with social reconstruction, formed one of the major sources of Fabian Socialist theory in the 1880s', and wrote of Sidney Webb, who spoke of the 'small but persistent band of "Positivists"', as helping to 'exert a potent disintegrating force', and that this 'infatuation with Positivism' became 'the lasting basis of his social faith'.[250] It has also been suggested that Webb found Positivism a useful 'transitional stage between reformist Liberalism and socialism', while his future wife, Beatrice, a close friend of Frederic Harrison, came to see the 'Religion of Humanity' as a way of embracing the service of mankind and 'the final development of the human intellect', a doctrine she would echo as late as 1932. Shaw proclaimed in 1897 that 'Socialists, by the way, should not forget their obligations to the Positivists – obligations so great that Mr Sidney Webb has declared that the most obvious modern application of Comte's "law of the three stages" is that Comtism is the metaphysical stage of Collectivism, and Collectivism the positive stage of Comtism.'[251] Webb certainly supported a Positivist ideal of the trusteeship of property on the part of capitalists and landlords, who would receive rent and interest, leaving the balance to be 'employed for public purposes and the public good'. He did not disguise the fact that his desire to 'moralise the capitalists'

[247] Quin. *Memoirs*, p. 134; Gould. *Hyndman*, p. 84.
[248] *NR* (30 Mar. 1890), 204; Olivier. *Letters and Selected Writings*, p. 61.
[249] See Lee. *Fabianism and Colonialism*, pp. 222–3, and Mohammed Nuri El-Amin. 'Sydney Olivier on Socialism and the Colonies', *RP*, 39 (1977), 521–39. On the wider debate on the 'Religion of Socialism' see Stephen Yeo. 'A New Life: the Religion of Socialism in Britain, 1883–1896', *HWJ*, 4 (1977), 5–56.
[250] Sidney Webb. *Socialism in England* (1889), p. 18; Willard Wolfe. *From Radicalism to Socialism … Fabian Socialist Doctrines, 1881–1889* (New Haven, 1975), pp. 43, 190.
[251] Beatrice Webb. *My Apprenticeship* (1926), p. 143; Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie. *The First Fabians* (1979), pp. 62, 124, 407; Edward Carpenter *et al. Forecasts of the Coming Century* (1897), pp. 153–4.

was Comtean. Indeed he conceded that 'his mind was so deeply impregnated with these ideas that they entered as a permanent element into his social thinking, causing him to trust to the conscience of the rich as an agency of change, and a condition allowing socialism to emerge as a result of a growing consensus in its favour'. To the Positivist economist John Kells Ingram he happily acknowledged 'being much impressed' and 'certainly much influenced in my economic views' by his writings.[252] This influence principally implied an acceptance of Comte's sociology, conceived particularly in terms of the growth of human solidarity, and even taking on such parts of the religion as touched on the same theme. This necessity for 'organised man [to] become conscious of himself, not as an individual but as a unit of the larger whole' thus became for Wolfe 'the essence both of Webb's Positivism and of his subsequent Socialist creed'. But Webb himself would also remark as early as 1888 that because of evolutionary theory, fixed utopian ideas like Comte's had 'become out-worn and impossible to us'. And if Positivism thus 'formed a way station for almost all the early Fabians about whom much evidence survives',[253] the Positivists' peculiar antagonism towards imperialism does not, somewhat paradoxically, seem to have infected the leading Fabians. Or at least what they derived from it was a sense of European leadership over less developed regions, rather than a strong desire to protect the latter. What Positivism helped contribute to Fabianism, certainly, was a sense of the need to rise above the sordidness of capitalist exploitation in order to forge a very different relationship with the non-European world. But Shaw's formulation of this relationship would have made most Positivists feel distinctly uncomfortable, being nominally neither socialists, imperialists nor such overt cosmopolitans. But with the views of Clarke, and to a degree Olivier, there were greater affinities. And as we will see in the next chapter, in their ultimate desire to aid the cause of humanity in general, the Positivists would also find some resonance in the positions adopted in Hobson's *Imperialism*.

THE ILP: MACDONALD, HARDIE AND SOME OTHERS

The most important propagandist of the leading socialist organisation of the period, the Independent Labour Party, was James Ramsay Macdonald

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[252] *The Practical Socialist* (Feb. 1887), 38; Harrison. *Sidney and Beatrice Webb*, pp. 40, 48; Ingram Papers, D2808/65/59.
[253] Wolfe. *From Radicalism to Socialism*, pp. 192–4; Sidney Webb. *English Progress towards Social Democracy* (1890), p. 3.

(1866–1937), who became the first Labour prime minister in 1924, and wrote at length on imperial problems from the Boer War onwards. Active in the Scottish Home Rule Association and the Fellowship of the New Life, Macdonald became a Fabian around 1886, and joined the ILP in 1894. He knew various Positivists, and recommended S. H. Swinny as a speaker on India around 1906, 'specially referring', Swinny boasted, 'to my articles on India in the Positivist Review'. Macdonald has been described as having 'exercised the biggest influence on the Labour Party's strategy and tactics'. As early as 1898 he had formulated a clearer line on foreign policy issues than many of his comrades. He stated that year that if

a foreign policy means a well-defined standpoint from which we seek to determine all our opinions as to what we should do abroad, Socialists have such a policy. We insist on regarding all partitions of China and raids upon African peoples, whether done by Germans, Russians, or ourselves, as nothing else than the attempts of capital to find new markets and higher profits. We are, therefore, opposed to any further extensions of the Empire, because they are only the grabbings of millionaires on the hunt, and the cost of maintaining them must ultimately be borne by the sinew, and mayhap, the life of the labour of the country.

'Britain's policy', Macdonald concluded, should thus be one 'of open honesty . . . directed towards the encouragement of free democratic institutions everywhere'.[254]

Macdonald's opposition to the Boer War led him to part from the Fabians. It also resulted in one of the most impressive accounts of imperialism of the period, published as an ILP London branch pamphlet in early 1900. *Imperialism. Its Meaning and Tendency*, which acknowledged a Positivist influence,[255] attacked all policy which implied 'that in our relations with other States we are to be guided not so much by the ideals of co-operation as by the assumptions of superiority'. Macdonald conceded the immense appeal to the 'man in the street' of expansionism, meaning 'a big ideal of an England chosen by its virtue to hold a commanding position amongst the peoples of the earth'. This entailed 'the constant extension of territory, whether we like it or not, the continued subjection of peoples whether we intend it or not'. 'By far the greater number of people who imagine that Imperialism can be part of a genuinely progressive creed', he added, 'do so because they believe that civilisation follows the flag.' This Macdonald denied. His position was, however, organicist rather than

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[254] Ingram Papers, D2808/54/42; John Callaghan. *Socialism in Britain since 1884* (Oxford, 1990), p. 68; *ILP News* (Jan. 1898), 2.

[255] It referred to *International Policy*.

relativist. That is to say, it did not deny the superiority of European civilisation, only that it was both 'impossible for one nation to civilize another by governing it' and also 'wrong that it should attempt to do so', for this tended 'to crush out and level down all national life to the dead uniformity of an alien political routine'. Instead civilisation was

a growth. The religion, the history, the circumstances of a people determine it. You cannot carry it about with you. The civilization of an Englishman in India is not that of London. A western civilization cannot be imposed on an Eastern, or a Temperate upon a Tropical, people. We can no more send our civilization to Central Africa than we can send our climate there.

If Britain had imposed a modicum of law and order where less existed beforehand, none the less this never could lead any people towards self-government. Alien rule in fact always diverted them from that path. In Egypt, for instance, the 'pax and jus Britannica involve the ruin of every robust national characteristic'. Having thus condemned all forms of imperialism, 'Jingo and anti-Jingo', as sharing the same essence, Macdonald warned of the consequences for democracy at home of continued expansion and the rising costs of militarism. And not only did civilisation not accompany the flag; Macdonald also denied that 'trade follows the flag'. Imperialism in fact resulted in many resources being wasted, whereas if 'the home market were properly cared for, trade would prosper; and if the community would take over the natural wealth of the country and use it for the common well-being, there would be enough and to spare for generations to come'. Imperialism also raised problems for aspiring democrats. Macdonald proclaimed that the 'union with our Colonies must be that of kindred democracies experimenting how to make the life of the people better'. 'Weaker peoples' hence needed to be protected 'from our vices', and guarded 'against those exploiting classes which are our own gravest menace; our place amongst the strong nations must be that of co-operative worker and honourable partner striving with them to promote peace and secure liberty and independence'.[256]

In several articles published in 1901, Macdonald reiterated these arguments, insisting that governments were not 'disconnectable from the psychology and history of a people', but expressed their 'innermost experience'.

[256] J. Ramsay Macdonald. *Imperialism. Its Meaning and Tendency* (1900), pp. 4–5, 10, 6–7, 9, 13–15. These views were reiterated in *EW* (21 Dec. 1901), 638. On the general development of Macdonald's views on the empire see Benjamin Sacks. *James Ramsay Macdonald in Thought and Action* (Albuquerque, 1952), pp. 327–424. See also Rodney Barker. 'Socialism and Progressivism in the Political Thought of Ramsay MacDonald', in A. J. A. Morris, ed., *Edwardian Radicalism 1900–1914* (1974), pp. 114–30.

Differences of 'national experience' in terms of 'religion, social condition, temperament, political exigencies' meant that self-government 'even when corrupt, unenlightened, imperfect' was 'essential to progress'. Consequently European powers should adopt what he termed 'the ring-fence method' of excluding the destructive forces of 'the spirit seller, the land speculator, the gold prospector'. After he had visited South Africa in 1902, too, Macdonald concluded that on 'purely moral grounds, if no other, the natives should have as little intercourse with white men as possible'.[257]

In the next few years, however, a shift in Macdonald's views towards a more positive view of empire seems evident. The influence of Hobson, whose 'splendid services' he acknowledged in 1908, seems particularly apparent in Macdonald's well-known *Labour and the Empire* (1907).[258] This has recently been described as 'a socialist version of Greater Britain ... not anti-imperialism but an alternative imperialism, framed by Macdonald and based on assumptions, if not of British superiority then at least of a British genius for government and administration that was of benefit to the colonised'.[259] Complaining that the newly formed (1906) 'Labour Party has as yet sanctioned no Imperial policy', Macdonald set about providing one. His leading point was to contrast 'the democratic principle of native administration', which was 'to develop native civilisation on its own lines – the educational method', with 'the Imperialist method', which was 'to impose upon it an alien civilisation – the political method'. Having established the incompatibility of democracy and imperialism, Macdonald contended that 'the British Empire under democratic custodianship can be a powerful element in the maintenance of peace and the promotion of the international spirit'. To apply this principle to the more or less self-governing colonies was one thing. The 'only serious difficulty' lay in the relations between colonists and natives, the resolution of which required a reconsideration of how imperial authority should be wielded, whether by federation, conference, or some other means, and how trade policy should

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[257] *EW* (21 Dec. 1901), 638; Macdonald. 'The Propaganda of Civilisation', *IJE*, 11 (1901), 463–6; Macdonald. *What I Saw in South Africa* (1902), p. 118.

[258] Macdonald. *Socialism and Society* (1908), p. 198. None the less Cain finds 'no hint of Hobson's leading ideas in Ramsay MacDonald's widely-read *Labour and the Empire*' ('British Radicalism, the South African Crisis, and the Origins of the Theory of Financial Imperialism', in David Omissi and Andrew S. Thompson, eds., *The Impact of the South African War*, 2002, p. 188). For suggestions of a Fabian debt here, see Keith Laybourn. *A Century of Labour* (Strand, 2000), p. 11. Porter places Macdonald much closer to Hobson (*Critics*, pp. 185–6, 238), even terming Macdonald's a 'Hobsonian ethical approach' (190).

[259] Ward. *Red Flag*, p. 70. A biographer complains that Macdonald's position 'fell far short of the anti-Imperialism which was to become a major force in the twentieth century' (Austen Morgan. *J. Ramsay Macdonald*, Manchester, 1987, p. 45).

be managed given constant colonial pressures for protection. A right of compelling trade, which he had not hitherto emphasised, Macdonald now asserted. Here he clearly followed Hobson, whose language he virtually adopted (some posit a Fabian debt here). 'Temperate lands have a right to ask from the Tropics some of their desirable productions,' asserted Macdonald, adding that the 'world is the inheritance of all men. Tribes and nations have no right to peg off parts of the earth and separate them from the rest as much as though they had been withdrawn to the moon.' None the less the peoples so affected possessed a 'superior right … to be treated as human beings', and fulfilling that responsibility was 'the kernel of the problem of dependency government'. Macdonald was quick to condemn the 'uprooting native civilisations, by destroying the economic expressions of these civilisations – such as tribal lands, by forcing the native mind into new grooves which that mind does not fit and never can fit'. The 'fundamental mistake', he thought, was 'that we regard the native as a Briton in the making'. Instead the aim should be developing local institutions, not 'the imposing of the ends of our national life'. In some cases this might include

the re-establishment of the rule of the chiefs; in others, a restoration of a kind of semi-democracy in which the people are partly enfranchised or elect part of the governing authority. In every case the native should be protected from the blighting exploitation of white men's capitalism; obstacles should be placed in the way of, rather than encouragement given to, the break-up of his tribal economic system … the less we interfere with native administration the better.

Thus a modified principle of democracy, qualified by actual local practices, was to reign supreme; 'so long as we regard the native as some one whom *we* must rule, we are attempting the palpable impossibility of ruling democratically at home and despotically abroad'. And nowhere was this more pressing than in India. Macdonald's rejection of the drain theory was noted as marking him off from 'the thorough-going opponents of the British system'.[260] Here he followed Hobson, as we will see, rather than Hyndman. But the irony, as we will see shortly, is that Hobson, the Fabians, Benjamin Kidd and others had led him in the direction of a pro- rather than anti-imperial position. Vattel had made another convert.

The theme of a benign imperialism which aided the rightful exploitation of raw materials while minimising the disruption to native rule and life would reappear in some of Macdonald's later works, which were amongst

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[260] Macdonald. *Labour and the Empire* (1907), pp. xv, 18, 37, 67, 98–9, 102–3; *Socialist Review* (Jan. 1911), 343.

the most influential Labour Party tracts of the epoch. In 1909 he reiterated that 'whilst the world has a right to enjoy the fruits of the tropics, it has no right to expropriate the native races by fraud or exploit them with cruelty, and it has no right to break up their communal habits, to demoralise them, and make them outcasts, beggars, and criminals'. He emphasised that

If the ruling nation is sympathetically and by educational means helping the native – not necessarily applying the same methods to him as it is applying to itself, but being guided by that spirit of human consideration and legal uprightness which is the breath of its own political life – it need not do violence to itself by appointing proconsuls, governors, and a staff of administrators for natives.

He cautioned, too, that

The equality of Socialism is not uniformity. It recognises differences. It has no cast iron system which is to be applied to all races and all conditions – no panacea, no universal mode of thought. It therefore does not consider the native race as a white one at an early stage of evolution.[261]

In the following year, after visiting the country, Macdonald published *The Awakening of India* (1910), which examined the rise of Indian nationalism, its newer and more urgent offshoots, and its relation to religious movements. He noted the growing distance between ruler and ruled, and its hindrance to self-government. He concluded that 'on the whole I therefore regard the future as belonging to Nationalism', though he thought the expulsion of the British a very remote possibility. The 'ring-fence' scheme was also given further detail in a plan proposed in 1917. Here Macdonald envisioned a three-stage process for replacing 'Imperialist Capitalism' which added further detail to his 1907 proposals:

1. The product of the tropics must be made available for our use, and every encouragement given to the natives to make these products ample, and to market them. 2. The rights, both humanitarian and economic, of the natives must be protected. Cruelty and slavery of every form must be prevented, and the natives' right to their land must not be interfered with. Native economic customs must not be changed to such an extent as to force them into a more degrading condition of existence than that in which they now live, and white exploiting overseers should not be employed. 3. If this war fails in its main declared object to secure a lasting peace, and it only ends in more danger and more preparation, the military defence of South Africa must be cared for.[262]

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[261] Macdonald. *Socialism and Government* (2 vols., 1909), vol. II, pp. 78–9, 85.
[262] Macdonald. *The Awakening of India* (1910), p. 297; Macdonald. *Socialism after the War* (1917), p. 71.

Clearly, like Hobson, inspired by Benjamin Kidd's *The Control of the Tropics* (1898), which he quoted without attribution,[263] Macdonald proposed that all lands fifteen degrees north and south of the Equator should cease to be European possessions, and instead be placed under the guardianship of an international commission mandated to protect the natives while developing 'the productiveness of the tropics through native agencies'. The commission would regulate relations between native peoples and the outside world, but, while eliminating commercial monopolies, would not 'exclude any State from legitimate trade, or . . . give preference to any'. In short, 'it would hold tropical Africa in trust for the world with no unnecessary interference with the natives'.[264] In this scheme, we should note, private trade would continue, if regulated, upon capitalist principles, but driven by a paternalist social agenda, not an exploitative imperialism.

In 1917 Macdonald again took up the vexed issue as to whether 'democracy and empire can co-exist'. His response was 'not if an aristocratic empire is understood'. Instead, however, he insisted,

The democracy, when it comes to settle boundaries, must settle them in accordance with nationality . . . An enlightened and awakened democracy will cut and carve the world in accordance with real historical divisions – real humanity. Ireland will be Ireland; Belgium will be Belgium; the Balkans will be the Balkans . . . the idea of the British Empire is that it is a loose federation of self-governing communities . . . and I think if we developed it in India, as we ought to do, more Home Rule, more self-government, and gave more and more freedom in the same respect to those parts of the world that we possess with lower races populating them it might be possible to carry on a good imperial system along with democracy at home.[265]

A subsequent volume, *The Government of India* (1919), acknowledged the difference that Indian wartime loyalty had made to at least some British perceptions, and the evident emergence of a 'new democratic epoch'.[266] In 1920 Macdonald recommended independence for Egypt on the grounds that it would not threaten, but strengthen, the security of the Suez Canal. But for India he still proposed 'self-government within the Empire'. He was also happy to praise both Scottish and Welsh nationalism, so long as 'nationality was not going to mean exclusiveness'. Macdonald would again assert in 1930 that no man 'can be an internationalist who does not value nationality'.[267]

[263] Macdonald. *Socialism after the War*, p. 62, quoting Kidd, p. 23.
[264] Macdonald. *Socialism after the War*, pp. 72–3.
[265] Macdonald. *Labour and International Relations* (1917), p. 5.
[266] Macdonald. *The Government of India* (1919), p. 270.
[267] Macdonald. *A Policy for the Labour Party* (1920), p. 169; ILP Papers, 6/7/1; Macdonald. *American Speeches* (1930), p. 44.

We see here what a distance Macdonald was from the anti-nationalist agenda of the Webbs and Shaw in 1900–1. There still none the less remained considerable ambiguity about how paternalist supervision should be defined vis-à-vis local rights and customary practices. (And some socialists, certainly, preferred even local tyranny to European rule.[268])

Measuring the degree of support for Macdonald's views amongst his closer associates, much less the approximately six thousand members of the ILP (in 1900), is difficult. At the time of the Boer War, it was later asserted, the 'ILP almost to a man were strong pro-Boers. They regarded the war as a capitalist illustration of the evils of unrestrained private capitalism.'[269] In other areas opinion is harder to gauge. Early on it seems to have been the ILP's official policy to avoid foreign policy as such. In its first year (1897) the *ILP News*, for instance, stated that

The ILP does not possess any set of opinions on foreign affairs that can be called a foreign policy, except in so far as it claims that the nature of democracy is such that if the power of the people were to become real, the unnatural monarch-made national barriers would break down without losing for us those special national characteristics that are valuable.

None the less Macdonald's views were also broadly associated with a vaguely anti-imperialist stance. Reviewing *Labour and the Empire* in 1907, for instance, a *Labour Leader* writer noted that 'everything … that pertains to Empire in contrast with independent nationhood is regarded, and not without good reason, by Socialists with great distrust'. A notice in the *New Age* indicated that Macdonald had 'good reason for believing' that his understanding of the empire represented 'the views of his party as a whole'.[270] Another statement of the ILP's outlook took the view that 'war, imperialism and the exploitation of native races are mainly caused by the greed of competing capitalist groups'. It opposed 'the exploitation of the economically backward races by the more advanced, and the introduction of capitalism as a substitute for the economic structure of native society. It declares for a relationship with the less-developed races, which

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[268] Referring to Burma, *Justice* proclaimed that 'annexation and Europeanisation are in the long run worse for the people than tyranny by their own rulers. The latter can be overthrown; the former in present circumstances cannot, nor can our blunders be rectified in any way. European control of native rule may be, and often has been beneficial to the subject people: annexation has been harmful in every case' (9 Jan. 1886, 4).

[269] BLPES, Fabian Society E122/6 (1907). A useful survey of some local ILP reactions is Deian Hopkin. 'Socialism and Imperialism: the ILP Press and the Boer War', in James Curran, Anthony Smith and Pauline Wingate, eds., *Impacts and Influences. Essays on Media Power in the Twentieth Century* (1987), pp. 9–26.

[270] *ILP News* (July 1897), 1; *LL* (26 Apr. 1907), 774; *NA* (9 May 1907), 23.

will prepare them as speedily as possible for self-government.' The ILP's constitution stated that 'the Socialist Commonwealth must ultimately be international, and that the prevention of the evils of war, imperialism, and the exploitation of native races can only be secured by a world organisation of free peoples, co-operating in the production and distribution of the world's goods'.[271] It also repeated that 'Socialism is an International Movement. It recognises that the interests of the workers throughout the world of whatever race, colour or creed are one; and that capitalism was the chief cause of war and imperialism.' Debating the issue as late as 1921, there were none the less clear divisions within the ILP as to how far imperialism should be condemned. Yet at various points we can also discern traces of Macdonald's toleration for a more relativist or organicist approach to native institutions. Writing in 1900, for instance, the *ILP News* proclaimed that

The Socialist wishes to secure the happiness and welfare of the Indian, and he realises that even with a Socialist administration at home we should be unable to attain that object, alien as we are in race, religion, and character. It should be then our wish to build up such native governments as might be possible to pave the way for our withdrawal ... it would be quite possible to revive the old native states, tempering their despotism by some form of constitution. In any case a despotism under a native ruler, who by race and religion is in harmony with his subjects and whose tyranny is tempered by the fear of assassination or revolution, is to be preferred to the harsh, unbending, though well-meaning, British rule.[272]

Thereafter the ILP retained a fairly consistently anti-imperialist line. Its chairman in 1911, William C. Anderson, wrote that a Labour foreign policy 'would not trample on nationhood. It would not oppress Eastern peoples whose civilisation and religion is not ours. It would spend less money on the means of destroying life and more on the means of redeeming it.' Reviewing the ILP's position from the South African war up to 1912, Anderson boasted that the party had

offered strong and unwavering opposition to the ill-treatment and subjection of weak or subject peoples. Frontier expeditions to Tibet, the shameless exploitation of the Congo, Italian raids on Tripoli, the attack on Persian independence – all have been condemned, whether this country or another has been the wrong-doer ... The ILP has been staunch and loyal to the cause of freedom in India. It has never ceased to protest against a system which enriches financiers and officials at the expense of the serfdom and impoverishment of the Indian people. In indicating

[271] Quoted in Fred Henderson. *The Socialism of the ILP* (*c.*1922), pp. 8, 10.
[272] *Socialism and the Empire* (1926), p. 1; *Resolutions and Nominations ... of the ILP* (1921), p. 27; *ILP News* (Mar. 1900), 2. An article in June strongly praised Macdonald's principle of not forcing 'civilisation' upon native peoples.

the road to freedom in India the Party has urged the need for a national system of free education, for organisation among native labourers and factory workers, for full right of association, freedom of speech, and liberty of the Press. Equally strong has been its plea for representative government.[273]

Keir Hardie

In conjunction with Macdonald we should also consider the views of the Scottish miners' leader James Keir Hardie, MP from 1892, leader of the ILP on its foundation in 1893, and later of the Labour Party, and a member of the Scottish Home Rule Association. Hardie expressed support for imperial federation as early as 1888, with Home Rule established in all countries of the empire and representatives meeting at a parliament in London. In 1893 he expressed the view that

the indomitable pluck and energy of the British people had carried the British flag all over the globe and promised to make the British Empire the one great power that would mould the affairs of the world. He thought it was only right that it should be so. If there must be a dominant race in the world's affairs, the safety of weak and struggling peoples could better be entrusted to the British Democracy than to the White Tsar of the North.[274]

Hardie's view of India also fell well short of commending independence. Again, writing in 1893, he argued that the people of India should 'have the management of Indian affairs at home, and … share in the glories of the Empire by sending her representatives to that imperial council which is one of the certainties of the future'. On visiting India in 1907 Hardie was willing to conclude that

It may be that the people of India are not yet fit for the Colonial form of self-government, but between that and the present soul-less bureaucracy there are many degrees of expansion in the direction of modifying bureaucratic power and enlarging the rights and liberties of the people.

But again he did not press for independence, contending that 'India may become, undimmed in its lustre, the brightest jewel in the crown of the Empire', if it had a 'largely extended measure of self-government'. But he also insisted that the ILP's general view was that the 'exploitation of the coloured races by the whites is just as obnoxious to the Socialist as is the exploitation of the poor by the rich'.[275]

[273] *LL* (8 Dec. 1911), 771; (3 May 1912), 276.
[274] Fred Reid. *Keir Hardie* (1978), p. 124.
[275] *LL* (June 1893), 5–6; (31 Jan. 1908), 68; (17 Apr. 1908), p. 254; Hardie. *The ILP and All About it* (n.d.), p. 13.

During the Boer War, however, which he condemned as a 'capitalist war', Hardie emphasised that while he was 'strongly pro-Boer', he was 'not anti-British, but merely anti-Capitalist'. He admired the Boers, whose 'Republican form of Government bespeaks freedom, and is thus hateful to tyrants, whilst their methods of production for use are much nearer our ideal than any form of exploitation for profit'. But his position was not anti-imperialist in the sense of hostility to empire in principle. Indeed, Hardie stressed in early 1901 that he 'felt more strongly than ever that the war was wrong ... [but] he did not want to see one bit of the British territory lost, for he believed that by a strong federation of free peoples the British Empire could be an immense power for good'. Thus it was possible to condemn the South African conflict as an imperialist war while upholding the virtues of the empire as such. But it was also plausible, if inconsistent, to see the prolongation of empire as merely delaying any socialist reforms. Hardie wrote in 1900 that

A great and extended Empire will lengthen the period required for change, and thus prolong the misery, and it follows that the loss of Empire would hasten the advent of Socialism. The greater the Empire, the greater the burdens of military expenditure and the harder the lot of the worker.[276]

OTHER SOCIALIST CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DEBATE

Outside of the leading socialist organisations and better-known writers, a number of other views expressed on imperial issues should be noted. Most of these discussions in the socialist press echoed the same range of opinions we have assessed so far, in so far as they were critical of capitalist imperialism, but willing to contemplate some improved and more humane socialist variant on the theme. It was not uncommon to encounter support for schemes of imperial union, such as that mooted as early as 1883 by the socialist journal *To-Day*, which promoted the idea of a 'Commonwealth Club', which would give 'Federal Union between England, Ireland, Scotland, India, and the British Colonies'. In many instances even before the Boer War, and certainly after Shaw's and Hobson's views became well known, we find a positive vision of socialist imperialism being floated. Thus the *Labour Prophet*, the organ of the Labour Church movement, in 1896 contrasted a 'strong and generous Imperialism' to 'a cowardly and grasping Imperialism'. It proclaimed Britain

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[276] Hardie. *Keir Hardie's Speeches and Writings* (n.d.), pp. 100–1; *LL* (17 Mar. 1900), 85; (9 Mar. 1901), 6; (17 Feb. 1900), 52.

to-day heir to an Empire which never had its equal in history. We are born to it, we cannot help it, and we have no desire to let it go. What we do desire is to make violent and wanton extension of it impossible, and to do justice in all parts of it . . . Socialism has a foreign policy. In Europe it means disarmament. In South Africa it means the absolute prohibition of trading companies with governmental powers. In India it means fiscal reform and a sudden check on militarism. In the case of the colonies of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada it means local autonomy and federation. Wherever new territories are opened up to us by fair means, the land and the minerals should be vested strictly in the State.

In a few very rare instances socialists assumed such ideals might entail 'a vast Anglo-American Commonwealth, with its centre not at Westminster but at Washington', in the belief that 'nothing is clearer that, in an ever increasing ratio, America must increase and Britain decline'.[277]

   One of the most extraordinary expositions of socialist imperialism took the form of a pamphlet by a Chester Fabian and ILP member, J. Ernest Jones, entitled *The Case for Progressive Imperialism*. Terming his subject 'the most important and epoch-making question', Jones contended that socialist 'International Solidarity' could best be understood in terms of a 'Progressive Imperialism . . . far more important for the civilisation and onward march of humanity than even British insular Socialism'. In Jones's view, 'Individualism' predominated in both SDF and ILP discussions of empire, in the 'Little Englandism' sense of 'every country speaking its own language, nationalism, national and racial sentiment, non-intervention or non-interference, insular treatment of world questions, the claim of nationality and national independence'. Instead, asserted Jones, 'nations and languages are themselves evil, and their swallowing up by some Great Power as inevitable, just, and necessary as the swallowing up of the small traders by the combines, trusts, and joint stock companies, and co-operative societies'. 'Constructive Imperialism – the world-state with one language and brotherhood', was thus the great alternative to 'logical Little Englandism . . . the abolition of our English-speaking colonies and all our foreign possessions'. Jones was at pains to point out, however, that by contrast to mere 'Trading Imperialism', 'Progressive Imperialism' would maintain the empire not by force, but 'by love, sympathy, and international interests' uniting 'a Commonwealth of free communities flying the British flag'. By promoting 'British freedom and civilisation' among 'backward races', the latter

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[277] *To-Day* (July 1883), 254; *Labour Prophet* (Apr. 1896), 50–2; Morrison Davidson. *Bluffing the Foreign Devils, Or, Dear-Bread Imperialism* (*c*.1904), p. 27.

could, when socialism emerged in Britain, also 'be in a sufficiently advanced state of evolution to adopt Socialism also, and thereby help to prevent the standard of life being pulled down by Chinese and other backward races'. Progressive Imperialism thus meant not 'England for Socialism, but the World for Socialism', for if 'Socialism was adopted in England only, we should be in danger of our civilisation being over-run by the low standard of life – nations of China, and such countries'. Assailing Irish nationalists, radicals and 'Little Englanders', Jones rejected 'the abstract right to unfettered freedom in self-government' in favour of 'the concrete administrative necessities of definitely organised Commonwealths'. Terming the language issue 'the question of questions as it strikes at the root of nationalism', he urged the universal use of English as alone capable of inhibiting war and civil conflict. Writing as a Welshman, he insisted that he would 'be more than pleased to hear that the Welsh language was dead and buried for evermore'. Small nations would 'have to be swallowed up by the big ones, and in course of time the big States will mutually and agreeably swallow each other up by fusion until there is only one State left – the world-state with one language and brotherhood'. Praising a similar ideal promoted by the *Clarion*'s 'Dangle' (Alex Thompson) and citing *Fabianism and the Empire* several times, Jones also quoted Hubert Bland's paean to Cecil Rhodes's creation of a 'higher meaning of Imperialism'. The course of 'Progressive Imperialism', he thought, implied that the United States – probably Jones's chief empirical model – would proceed on such a course in the Americas. Australia would export British institutions to the south Pacific, while Britain would extend its possessions in Africa. In Europe, too, smaller nations would incorporate into the larger, with France, Germany, Italy, Russia and Britain all increasing in size by using a system of 'boycott and prohibitive tariffs to force and starve any obstinate nation into surrender'. Too large to be forcibly converted to democracy, Russia would, however, be carefully watched to make sure it did not grow unduly. Jones concluded by calling for the creation of an Imperialist Socialist Party led by 'a body of celibate organisers' modelled on the Catholic Church. This was a preposterous scheme, perhaps, but it did demonstrate the considerable logical limits to which the Fabian vision of empire could be stretched.[278] And it clearly enjoyed a degree

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[278] J. Ernest Jones. *The Case for Progressive Imperialism* (2nd edn, 1902), pp. 1–24. The first edition has not been traced.

of sponsorship: six hundred copies were distributed to Fabian Society members.[279]

The Ethical Movement, led in Britain by Stanton Coit, which was close to Positivism on some points[280] and to which Hobson was affiliated, also lent its support to a socialist-imperialist ideal. In 1898, for instance, its journal, the *Ethical World*, commended 'the heart of true Imperialism, the substitution of an ethical and economic bond for the ties of political coercion'. Ethicists did not feel that the existing empire had increased trade. Indeed, as G. H. Perris, one of Hobson's 'closest friends for many years',[281] put it in 1901,

imperial expansion has brought increased costs in human life, in armaments, and in burdens of government, and has brought increased risks both within and without, it is not likely to bring trade in the future in proportion to these costs and risks, since the proportion of low-grade populations, who cannot be as good customers as white peoples, is constantly increasing, and true colonies are not being made, and cannot be made, by imperial process.

Instead, Perris argued, Britain's chief rivals, the United States and Germany, had adopted a strategy of promoting 'superior commercial skill and enterprise' and 'education and energy'. Britain's great advantage, the industrial revolution, had been thrown away for 'a mess of imperial pottage' by funding territorial expansion rather than 'sadly needed industrial improvements (in stock, machinery, and processes)'. Perris felt that the 'immense increase of our floating capital in the last few years' derived from a 'feverish search for a better rate of interest, and for a market free from the restraints of British life'. But the interest upon such investments was 'nearly always ... a weapon to be used in this country against Democracy', since the empire was 'a medium through which the stock-jobber gets hold of the immense sums brought together by the development of credit and joint-stock trading, and makes a new preserve for the reactionary elements of our national life'.[282] None the less the *Ethical World* became increasingly exuberant in its pronouncements about empire.[283] 'All patriotic Britons – and

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[279] *ILP News* (Feb. 1903), 2.

[280] For the links, see Horace J. Bridges, ed. *The Ethical Movement* (1911), p. 7, and I. D. MacKillop. *The British Ethical Societies* (Cambridge, 1985). Frederic Harrison, however, thought Coit had misunderstood Positivism: see his 'Positivists and Doctor Coit', *IJE*, 17 (1906), 13–16. Coit's rejection of the worship of Humanity is explained in Society of Ethical Propagandists. *Ethics and Religion* (1900), pp. 390–1.

[281] *EW* (18 Mar. 1898), 177; J. A. Hobson. *Confessions of an Economic Heretic* (1938), p. 93.

[282] *EW* (8 June 1901), 358–9.

[283] By concentrating on its opposition to the Boer War a contrary impression is offered in MacKillop. *The British Ethical Societies*, e.g., pp. 156–8.

what Briton is not a patriot? – will be in hearty sympathy with the main objects of the Empire movement,' it proclaimed in 1908. A 'mighty influence for good in the world', Britain should aim, the journal insisted, to establish 'a vast chain of free and self-governing states knit together by bonds of affection and esteem, and proud of their common heritage in the world-wide Empire which will stand forth as the incarnation of liberty and law'. During the First World War it became even more emphatically pro-imperial, contending that the empire had become 'a spiritually self-conscious entity ... forced into a unity of self-consciousness such as could only have been produced by a century of wise impartial statesmanship'.[284] Coit now threw himself behind the slogan 'The United States of the British Empire', contending that the choice lay between 'tyranny and military coercion and federal principle'. He insisted that 'if only Labourites and Socialists knew the history of colonization as well as they know that of trade unionism, they would promulgate a policy of Socialistic Imperialism as the only hope of an ultimate world-wide international Socialism. Our Empire is the greatest asset which the dreamers of a co-operative commonwealth possess ... a new Imperialism is astir. It is in all parties.' Yet for this scheme to work, he also insisted, it was necessary 'to grant Home Rule all round to the four constituents of the United Kingdom, and at the same time to distribute among all the oversea dominions and India a large part of the imperial power which the United Kingdom has monopolised'. By 1916, the journal was also supporting a scheme for nationalising Britain's foreign commerce, a proposal we will later see Hobson adopting:

International capitalism, pushed by private enterprise and protected by States, is the chief cause of the present War ... If henceforth there be no foreign investments by the private capitalists of any nation, there will be no more wars anywhere; there will be peace on earth, because good will can then reign among nations without any danger to any. The substitution in each nation of the Government as international financier in the place of private capitalists under Government protection is the only realistic peace policy.[285]

The growing trend towards imperialism after 1900 could also be defended from a number of other viewpoints which could still appease socialist consciences. Leaving the natives to their own devices or their own previous rulers did not always seem to be the kindest option. A *Labour Leader* reviewer thus wrote respecting Egypt in 1906 that, if Britain

[284] *EW* (15 June 1908), 41; (15 Jan. 1908), 2; (1 Oct. 1914), 146. G. H. Perris hinted at a similar position in 'The New Internationalism', in Stanton Coit, ed., *Ethical Democracy* (1900), pp. 30–59.
[285] *EW* (1 Nov. 1915), 164; (1 Dec. 1915), 183; (1 Feb. 1916), 17.

evacuated the country, 'the proletariat of Egypt would still be left under the heel of the Khedive, and the officials and exploiters'. Thus 'from the Socialist point of view' it was

better for the Egyptian people that Egypt should for the present remain under the tutelage of Great Britain. The British occupation of Egypt inevitably tends itself to the innoculation of the native mind with European ideas, as it has done in India. And just as it would be absurd for England to leave India until India has obtained the rudiments of self-government, and has become impregnated with the ideas and ideals of social-democracy, so it would be equally absurd for England to evacuate Egypt.

Then there was the issue of other, possibly even worse, external aggression. It was a 'sound principle', wrote Harry Quelch in 1905, that 'we should abandon our dominion of subject races and leave them free to work out their own development'. But he added that 'having taken them under our control we surely owe it to them to defend them against some other and maybe worse aggressor'. And Britain's greater notional liberty, if rarely noticeable as an aspect of colonial rule as such, could none the less still be used as a pretext for socialist imperial expansion. Writing under the title 'Socialism and Colonial Development', John R. Widdup explained even before the Boer War, in 1898, that if British workers were freer than their continental counterparts,

if we are to extirpate national differences in a world-wide commonwealth, surely it will be easier and better to do this by going on with our Imperial development rather than by waiting to see the unappropriated portions of the world fall under the control of Governments who are not compelled to accord to their subjects that degree of freedom which the English governing class are *compelled* to give to their peoples the world over.[286]

And another socialist, the Chelsea architect C. R. Ashbee, could write in 1906 that his conception of socialism was 'quite compatible' with 'the Imperial England of Disraeli, of Cecil Rhodes, of Rudyard Kipling'.[287]

Such justifications tended to become increasingly common in the early years of the twentieth century. The *New Age* under the editorship of A. R. Orage and Holbrook Jackson, for instance, took up a markedly socialist-imperialist line in this period.[288] A 1907 article headed 'Planning

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[286] *LL* (6 July 1906), 99; *The Social Democrat* (15 June 1905), 332; (July 1898), 211.

[287] C. R. Ashbee. *Socialism and Politics* (1906), pp. 43–4.

[288] Privately, A. R. Fletcher of the *New Age* wrote that he had 'no objection to the Anglo-Saxons subduing the universe if they can do it by fair means but I object to their doing it by gunpowder and rum' (Kidd Papers, F42).

an Empire' contended that 'if the Empire is not to go to pieces in the course of the next hundred years or so ... the barren negation of the old Radical Little-Englandism is impossible. If we accept it we are false to all our traditions', and insisted that only 'a Socialist Federation – a Socialist Empire' would suffice. A lengthy piece later the same year entitled 'Socialist Imperialism' put the case even more bluntly:

no Socialist Government would survive a week that proposed to surrender any part of our possessions ... the only genuine Imperialist is the Socialist, since he alone has an enlightened conception of what Imperialism should really denote, and the courage to conceive and work out his ideals. The only Empire worth fighting or working for would consist of a community of free men working in harmony for the highest possible development of each individual capacity, both physical and intellectual ... the Socialist attitude towards Imperialism can be defined in a sentence: Provide a worthy nation, and then defend it to the last drop of blood.

Early the following year, indeed, the *New Age* went so far as to praise an article by Lord Curzon in the *Nineteenth Century*, which insisted upon a 'moral basis' for imperialism, and upon 'the identity of this with the moral basis of Socialism', the 'supreme idea of true Imperialism being the sacrifice of the individual to the needs of the state'. This made Curzon, no doubt to his surprise, 'already more than half a Socialist'. And similarly, even the Positivist socialist F. J. Gould by 1912 was also linking the future of socialism to a scheme of positivised imperial federation. This he thought would have three consequences:

first, that an imperial war is less likely to be undertaken when it depends upon the Federal Council than when it depends upon a British Cabinet of the present type; second, that the noble Positivist ideal of an international fleet assumes initial shape when one fleet is controlled by India, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Canada, and the United Kingdom; and, third, that Socialism will rapidly evolve from its insular British form and its isolated over-sea manifestations, and organise its forces in a mode commensurate with the Empire ... The Socialists of the British Commonwealth will then ... act as an immense support of the world's peace and progress.

In 1915 Gould termed this scheme a 'British Empire Socialism; let us say Imperial Socialism for short', and claimed that 'we are approaching a new form of Imperial Federation, or Empire Council', where representatives of Canada, Australia and so on might join a peace conference and form 'a federal Socialist Party for the Empire'.[289]

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[289] *NA* (2 May 1907), 1; (27 June 1907), 137–8; (18 Jan. 1908), 225; F. J. Gould. *Whither, British?* (1912), p. 14; *Justice* (6 May 1915), 2.

Not all leftist opponents of imperialism were or remained formally affiliated with the leading organisations of the period, but the influence of several should at least be acknowledged here. Amongst the more strident critics was the naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace, whose Owenite background may have predisposed him towards an anti-imperial outlook.[290] Though he did not write extensively against empire, Wallace condemned the 'thinly-veiled slavery in many of our tropical or sub-tropical colonies' which he thought resulted from 'the aggrandisement and greed and lust of power of the ruling classes – kings and kaisers, ministers and generals, nobles and millionaires'. He also attacked Shaw and the Fabian line in mid-1900, denying

that we have any right to force our rule over people who do not want it, under the pretence of better government. I maintain that force is never the better way, and that every people should be left to develop their own civilisation and their own government, aided by advice and example, but never by compulsion … the worst government of a people by themselves is better than the best government by foreign conquerors.[291]

Wallace used his extensive experience of life in the tropics to argue that less civilised peoples were not morally inferior, but rather that 'human character, both moral and emotional' demonstrated 'no marked superiority in any race or country'. In 1904 he denounced as 'sanctimonious' Britain's claim 'to be more moral than other nations, and to conquer and govern and tax and plunder weaker peoples for *their* good! While robbing them we actually claim to be their benefactors!' The course he then recommended was 'to treat all subject peoples and all foreign Powers on exactly the same principles of equity, of morality, and of sympathy, as we treat our friends, neighbours and acquaintances'. And this, Wallace suggested, might commence by returning Gibraltar to Spain.[292]

The contribution of Edward Carpenter (1844–1929), who met Hyndman in 1883, also merits note. Carpenter, describing 'England's Ideal' in 1884, insisted that India, 'the playground of the sons of English capitalists', 'must go', that Ireland would 'desert us', that 'Egypt will curse the nation of Bondholders'.[293] He was involved in the Fellowship of the New Life, the spiritual mother of the Fabian Society. His own concerns, however, were

[290] See my 'Wallace and Owenism', in Charles Smith and George Beccaloni, eds., *Natural Selection and Beyond: the Intellectual Legacy of Alfred Russel Wallace* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 235–62.
[291] *Clarion* (21 July 1900), 280.
[292] Alfred Russel Wallace. *The Wonderful Century* (1898), pp. 336–7; Wallace. *Social Environment and Moral Progress* (1913), p. 34; *Clarion* (30 Sep. 1904), 1.
[293] Edward Carpenter. *England's Ideal* (1887), pp. 2–3. See Chushichi Tsuzuki. *Edward Carpenter 1844–1929* (Cambridge, 1980).

moving in a rather different direction from those of the more formidable Fabian big guns, as was evidenced by a lecture he gave the Society in 1894. 'Civilised man', he here proclaimed, 'had fallen way from nature, and to be again non-self-conscious and happy he must get back to her. Of this return journey we might all make a beginning by living more out of doors, and wearing less clothes.' He was opposed by a genteel trio, Hyndman, Bland and Shaw, who were evidently in no mood to root about in the garden or disrobe.[294] In the early 1890s Carpenter became 'intensely interested in the wise men of the East', and flirted with Theosophy, whose contribution to revitalising Buddhism he praised,[295] as well as Indian philosophy more generally, whose evident focus on the mastery of desire he found most impressive. Carpenter's subsequent pilgrimage to the East, detailed in his 1892 volume on travels in India and Ceylon, noted the demand of the natives for equal treatment. But while praising 'the broad and liberal spirit of administration with less of rapine than perhaps ever known in such a case before', he noted equally the growing gap between the races. The encounter persuaded him of 'the essential oneness of humanity everywhere'. Carpenter offered an extensive account of Indian religion and its similarity in aim to Christianity, and praised the nationalist Congress movement as heralding 'the decadence of our political power in India'.[296] He would later write at length, and with considerable admiration, on China, whose aesthetic, communal, unmilitaristic qualities he found most praiseworthy. A sympathy with non-European peoples, and challenge to the vaunted moral superiority of 'civilisation', was indeed integral to his plea for the greater simplification of life, in which 'the vast majority of mankind must live in direct contact with Nature'. By the second edition of *From Adam's Peak to Elephanta* (1903), Carpenter had developed a markedly more critical stance on British rule. He now insisted that the Boer War demonstrated that

the powerful monetary and commercial interest which, for its own private ends, puts the cry of Empire in the people's mouths ... is the same interest which is continually pushing the nation forward, at immense expense of blood and treasure, in the prosecution of small wars over the globe, for the purpose of opening up foreign markets.[297]

[294] *To-Day* (Feb. 1889), 55. Shaw was in fact a vegetarian and teetotaller.
[295] Carpenter. *My Days and Dreams* (3rd edn, 1917), p. 142.
[296] Carpenter. *From Adam's Peak to Elephanta* (2nd edn, 1903), pp. 173, 54–5, 267, viii, 353.
[297] Carpenter. 'Social and Political Life in China', in his *Towards Industrial Freedom* (1917), pp. 164–214; Carpenter. *England's Ideal*, p. 75; Carpenter. *From Adam's Peak*, pp. 359–60. See Carpenter. 'Characteristics and Customs of Pre-Civilized Peoples', in his *Civilization: Its Cause and Cure* (15th edn, 1921), pp. 265–99.

Carpenter's main contribution to debates respecting imperialism in this period was *Empire: In India and Elsewhere* (1900), issued as a pamphlet by the Humanitarian League. This praised Hyndman as 'one of the few Englishmen who have gone thoroughly into this great question of India's bankruptcy'. It used his arguments about Indian finance in order to estimate the 'total drain' from India to Britain as about £26 million annually,[298] and roundly condemned the 'hollow pretence' of empire as such.[299] Yet the Boer War also demonstrated to Carpenter the potential to create 'a real empire of Humanity'. 'What a kingdom we might establish', he mused, 'if in our great power we could only come among all these people in a spirit of understanding and sympathy – to heal race-divisions, to build an empire in their hearts, the greatest the world has ever seen!' His anti-imperialist views have thus recently been described as containing 'traces of a subtle sense of superiority'. During the First World War Carpenter also wrote in defence of a 'true patriotism', defying those socialists who contended that this inhibited the growth of internationalist sentiments, and calling for a new European organisation based upon '*international* solidarity and federation'.[300]

A variety of Christian Socialists also touched on the subject of empire in this period.[301] Their press could be scathing on wars in the Sudan and Burma, but also described British rule in India as preferable to that in the native states.[302] It has indeed been claimed that 'Christian socialists preserved more of a united front against colonial war than did British socialists in general,' that 'Colonial expansion was the one object of censure common to almost all British Christian socialists during the revival period,' and that if 'the word "socialism" traditionally implies anticolonialism and strong opposition to imperialist expansion, then the Christian Social Union as exemplified by its two chief figures, Scott Holland and Charles Gore, was on this score more socialist than the Fabian Society'. These examples, however, need to be arrayed against the Anglo-Catholic Father Paul Bull, who upheld a spiritualised imperialism. It has also been asserted that the Christian

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[298] But the domestic contrast was instructive: in 1899 nearly £70 million of the total home revenue of £103 million was spent on naval and military expenditure and debt repayment.

[299] Carpenter. *From Adam's Peak*, p. 361; Carpenter. *Empire: In India and Elsewhere* (1900), pp. 6, 15 (reprinted in *Humanitarian Essays*, 1904, pp. 1–15); see also Carpenter. 'The Awakening of China', in the *Co-operative Wholesale Society's Annual* (Manchester, 1907).

[300] Carpenter. *Boer and Briton* (1900), p. 4; Sheila Rowbotham. *Edward Carpenter* (2008), p. 343; Carpenter. *The Healing of Nations* (1915), p. 131; Carpenter. *Never Again!* (1916).

[301] The general enthusiasm of the earlier Christian Socialists for the empire is stressed in Edward Norman. *The Victorian Christian Socialists* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 66, 154, 180.

[302] E.g., *The Christian Commonwealth* (19 Feb. 1885), 245; (10 Sep. 1885), 613.

Socialists generally derived their critique of empire largely from Hobson.[303] Given the prevalence of Christian influence upon socialism in this period it would be surprising if we did not encounter some religious prejudice on occasion in the socialist press, linked to a civilisational argument. But such instances seem scarce. In one such, writing in the *Socialist Review* on 'Socialists and Colonial Policy' in 1911, S. H. Halford contended that colonial education should aim to eradicate 'degrading' superstitious religious beliefs. Rejecting the view that Christianity was a 'Western' religion, too, Halford insisted that it was 'no more "Western" than the rules of arithmetic'.[304]

Finally, we should also acknowledge the views of the Fabian journalist Clarence H. Norman (1886–1974), who protested against British actions in Tibet, Egypt, South Africa and elsewhere. Norman pointed out that the rise of democracy and the progress of imperialism went hand in hand, and that in fact, respecting Africa in particular, the 'democracies of the world, if called on to account for their treatment of their weaker brethren, would have to meet a graver indictment than the worst and most abandoned despot that the world has hitherto known'. He also contributed a damning indictment entitled 'Empire and Murder' to the *Social Democrat* in 1906.[305] This asserted that 'the strange idea that an Empire is essential to a nation's welfare or success' was perhaps the chief barrier to socialism. Describing empire-building as 'only house-breaking reduced to a science', Norman accused those who boasted of 'civilising' the native races of actually 'imposing on those races a system of torture and assassination, worthy of the Spanish Inquisition or the Chinese Boxers'. 'Civilisation' thus did 'not root out, but rather encourages the growth of barbarism'. Unusually, he examined at length two cases, Natal and Western Australia, lamenting the 'dying out of the black race' there. French, Spanish, Russian, German, Dutch, Portuguese, Japanese, American and Turkish imperial brutalities were not ignored either. He concluded with a parting shot at 'the vain-glorious rhapsodies of Mr Robert Blatchford'. An anti-conscriptionist, Norman would later, as a soldier, be tried in 1916 for refusing to obey orders; he was described at the time as having 'strong religious views'.[306]

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[303] Peter d'A. Jones. *The Christian Socialist Revival 1877–1914* (Princeton, 1968), pp. 8, 198.
[304] *Socialist Review* (Nov. 1911), 237–8.
[305] C. H. Norman. *Essays and Letters on Public Affairs* (1913), pp. 71–86, 162; *The Social Democrat* (15 May 1906), 264–73, reprinted as *Empire and Murder* (1906).
[306] *LL* (6 July 1916), 7.

SOCIALISM AND LITTLE ENGLAND

In the final section of this chapter we need to consider how far socialist criticisms of empire entailed a well thought-out vision of what Britain might or should become once it had renounced its imperial extensions. Criticisms of empire from the left were easily caricatured as 'socialistic Little Englanderism'.[307] Logically, however, if the empire was to be abandoned or broken up, or devolutionary 'Home Rule' occurred, 'Greater Britain' would indeed eventually shrink into 'Britain' or something still smaller. To the Fabians, and most, undoubtedly, of the public, such ideas were anathema. To others, however, they represented a possibility which had to be anticipated, and might even be welcomed. But how could 'Little England' be portrayed as an attractive outcome of imperial scepticism? One major exposition in particular requires scrutiny here for its efforts to flesh out an ideal of a post-imperial 'Little England', a series of five articles in *Justice* subsequently reprinted as a pamphlet entitled *What is the Good of Empire?* (1901), by the prolific Scottish journalist and pamphleteer James Leatham.[308] Leatham's starting-point was the assumption that 'we are neither wealthier nor healthier, neither happier nor more comfortable, neither more moral nor more progressive as a result of Imperialism'. Surveying the great empires of world history, Leatham noted that all had 'either ceased to exist as world-powers, have ceased to exist even as nations, or if they exist it is as vassal States or as States, independent indeed, but decrepit, corrupt, stagnant, and incapable'. Imperialism drained useful manpower and was also 'a curse to the inferior races'.[309] In his final article Leatham explored at some length, under the title 'The Alternative to Empire', what might follow. Here he emphasised that

the test of greatness is qualitative and not quantitative. It is the small states that grow and thrive and have made history, and it is when a State reaches a great degree of expansion that it has most to fear. At the present time, the State in all the world which is to every appearance safest, soundest and most internally healthy is the little peaceful State of Switzerland, with its industrious, well educated people and ideal democratic institutions.

The alternatives to 'Militant Imperialism', then, thought Leatham, were three:

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[307] E.g., Emil Reich. *Imperialism* (1905), p. 169.
[308] See Bob Duncan. *James Leatham (1865–1945)* (Aberdeen, 1978).
[309] *Justice* (19 Jan. 1901), 3; James Leatham. *What is the Good of Empire?* (1901), pp. 7, 11, 15–16.

(1) the Imperialism of commerce based on friendly relations with all our neigh-
bours; (2) progressive development of our industrial life by technical education and
training and the giving our minds to work; and (3) above all, the securing of
markets at home by the diffusion of purchasing power among our own people [by]
the complete socialisation of rent, profit, and interest, and the substitution of
production for use instead of production for dividends.

In the pamphlet version, Leatham also added

In short, *in*tensive civilization as against the *ex*tensive barbarism of costly conquest
and useless annexation. A power glorious in literature, science, and the applied arts,
in the liberty and the self-respecting happiness of its people, is surely infinitely more
admirable, as it is likely to be more lasting, than an iron-handed, wooden-headed
militarism, spreading itself over the world, and mighty chiefly to destroy, to waste,
and to hinder.[310]

Leatham's contribution to this debate indicated how complex the issues
were, as well as the degree to which, as we have already seen in the case of a
number of Positivists, respecting both Ireland and Scotland, regional ten-
sions within Britain itself intersected with imperial issues. (Leatham himself
would later support 'the genuine patriotism which is public spirit, local or
national', notably in the Scottish and Irish instances.[311]) It was in fact not all
that uncommon, as we have seen, for radicals and socialists in this period to
call for regional assemblies in Britain; John Mahon's *A Labour Programme*
(1888) included Home Rule for Scotland and Wales. British ethnic nation-
alism and anti-imperialism could intersect in various ways. Thus the
Comunn Nan Albannach (The Scots National League) issued a manifesto
in 1910 which condemned imperialism in Egypt and India. In a debate in
The Socialist over 'Socialism and Nationalism' early the following year, a
letter from a 'Gaelic Nationalist' emphasised that, to some, 'Nationalism
implies the fullest welfare of the people constituting the nation.' It added
that 'Scotland, if politically separate, would almost certainly be a much
better governed country than it is now,' and praised a 'disinterested endeav-
our to revive and extend one of the most beautiful languages in Europe',
Gaelic. Morrison Davidson also supported such aims.[312]

Clearly part of the problem of envisioning a socialist 'Little England' was
that it thus ran directly contrary, as we have seen, to the anti-'patriotic'
internationalism so strenuously advocated by Bax, as well as the Fabian
variant on internationalism. A letter to *Justice*, in the midst of a relentless

[310] *Justice* (16 Feb. 1901), 3; Leatham. *What is the Good of Empire?*, p. 16.
[311] *The Gateway* (mid-June 1914), 3; Leatham. *The Deep Fact of Nationalism* (Cottingham, 1914), p. 11.
[312] *The Socialist* (Nov. 1910), 23; (Jan. 1911), 38; Morrison Davidson. *Africa for the Africanders* (1902).

pro-Boer and anti-'patriot' campaign by Bax, contended that 'as imperialism is essentially a political and only incidentally an economic system . . . "little Englandism" is the real alternative to it . . . But I always thought that what is known as nationality-mongering was taboo to Socialists.' Yet 'nationality' also had many supporters, and it is quite plausible to link their views to an 'oppositional Englishness' in this period.[313] Stanton Coit insisted in 1901 that while some democrats still adhered to 'eighteenth-century humanitarianism, which was anti-nationalistic', and to the 'custom' of nineteenth-century socialism to be 'materialistic and unpsychological' and 'not deal with the living forces in the human breast', 'our principle of internationalism commits us to a recognition of the sacredness of nations'. Writing a month later under the title 'Patriotic Socialism', Coit continued that

Unless we are to have bloodshed and civil war in all the countries of the West, democrats must become nationalists; the unpatriotic Socialism of a quarter of a century ago must be crushed out. The working people in each country must organise themselves as a distinct political party, and grow from a minority into a majority . . . The alternative to the international Socialism of the nineteenth century is not the isolation of the working people of one country from those of another, but their co-operation through their State Governments.[314]

We will shortly see how closely this approximated to Hobson's strategy.

Besides intersecting the issue of nationalism, the question of a vision of 'Little England' was also at bottom an economic one: how self-sufficient should Britain become, and on what terms should it trade with other nations? The old radicalism of Cobden and Bright, as we have seen, accepted the logic of the international division of labour as established by Smith and Ricardo. The ILP typically leant its support to a more self-sufficient economic ideal, terming the idea of England as the 'workshop of the world' a 'mistake', and instead viewing the land as 'the basis of our national industry', and manufactures as secondary. A vague commitment to free trade was none the less generally evident amongst various socialist writers in this period. An ILP paper, for instance, argued in February 1898 that

Britain . . . insists that such trade as the Chinese wish to conduct with the outside world should be open to all nations alike. To this policy no Socialist can raise any

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[313] *Justice* (16 Mar. 1901), 6. The case for an 'oppositional Englishness' over a much longer period is examined in Stephen Yeo. 'Socialism, the State, and Some Oppositional Englishness', in Robert Colls and Philip Dodd, eds., *Englishness. Politics and Culture 1880–1920* (1986), pp. 308–69.
[314] *EW* (12 Jan. 1901), 19; (2 Feb. 1901), 73.

objection, nay, it even commends his commendation, and as the ultimate argument between nations is war, we should have been forced to regard a war in defence of these interests as justifiable.[315]

Keir Hardie, too, supported an idealised form of future free trade, writing that the 'day will come when the ships will still be sailing, the marts still busy, the merchants still coming and going, but when the sordid element will all be eliminated. There will then be free trade indeed ... Such is the dream, the ideal of the Socialist.' Yet Hardie could also insist that 'under Socialism England would be independent of its foreign trade ... England was capable of producing all the essentials needed for a population four times as numerous as the present.' In the Socialist League the talented economist John Carruthers promoted an ideal of competing co-operative societies within a socialist Britain serving as a model for trade between socialist nations, a scheme that doubtless influenced Morris.[316]

Amongst the more substantial examinations of the question as to how far future socialist states might engage in foreign trade was a debate commenced by Sydney Olivier. He set forth at length in 1888 the view that 'some Socialists think free trade is a capitalist policy and that the means of production once socialized, English industry would need protection against the competition of foreign products made by wage-labour in countries still suffering under a Capitalist system'. But, Olivier insisted, foreign trade was in fact only 'the means of internationalising the advantages of different countries in the production of wealth'. The idea that 'each country should be as far as possible self-contained and self-supporting' was nothing more than 'a relic of barbarism or a shred of insoluble stupidity', since no country could produce all the means of wealth it required. Freedom of trade, thus, while now unequal, would be 'an *unmixed* advantage to a country only under a Socialist system'. Olivier did not insist that nations were compelled to engage in foreign trade, as Hobson would suggest a decade later. His article, however, met with a vigorous challenge from a London member of the Socialist League, D. Gostling, who argued that since the 'first and foremost tenet' of socialism was 'the iniquity of rent and interest', both would be abolished in the future. Loans made to nations that were 'compelled to pay their interest at the point of the bayonet' would cease, and, 'as Socialism is nothing if not international, a patriotic feeling will speedily spring up in each country against any such continued draining of their

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[315] *ILP News* (June 1903), 1; (Feb. 1898), 3.
[316] *LL* (24 Oct. 1903), 341; ILP Papers, 6/1/8. See John Carruthers. *Political Economy of Socialism* (*c.*1885), pp. 15–16, and generally Carruthers. *Communal and Commercial Economy* (1883), pp. 287–92.

resources'. The existing system, Gostling explained, was intimately linked with British arms, such loans to foreign governments having expanded greatly after the Crimean War, being 'the direct result of the large standing armies which then became fashionable, while the foreign railway loans were made by capitalist exploiters under the fancied security that the belief in the power of the British Government would compel their repayment'. Consequently, foreign trade in future would 'shrink much in bulk, so much so as to alter the face of our civilisation'. Rather than, like India, being compelled to export raw produce, notably food, in order to pay such foreign debts, nations would export only once their own needs were met, since

The ryot would much prefer to eat wheat instead of living upon coarse indigestible millets, while the Russian would also keep his wheat if he were not forced by his pecuniary necessities to export it. No beef would come from the States and South America, nor from the continent of Europe, were it not that money is needed to pay the rent, or to repay the money lender his advances.

Britain having moved from shifting Manchester textiles to selling Manchester mill machinery, other countries would become self-sufficient in clothing. Britain itself would 'have to depend very much upon her own resources'. The new social system would bring about an 'immense migration from the city to the country' which would be 'intensified by the shrinkage of foreign trade'. The 'remorseless squeezings of the poor man by the rich man, of the poor country by the rich nation' would end at the same time. Once import bounties provided by shipping companies were removed, locally produced goods would clearly have an advantage. Though he acknowledged that some 'may say that, in the old days, Sparta tried this system and found it would not answer', Gostling's Little England imagined that

The people will leave the cities, swarm on the land, and with universal compulsory education in the three Rs, and in technical matters useful to each commune, such as ploughing, cooking, tailoring and the trades generally, each person will have ample leisure to go in for literature, science and art, and any man who wants elaborate furniture or pictures, or musical instruments, or the thousand and one nic-nacs of refined life, will join with those like-minded with himself to make them in their spare time, after their two hours of daily physical work for the commune are over … all will be equal in social rank, and all will give willing service in their turn.[317]

317 *To-Day* (Mar. 1888), 72–88; *Our Corner* (1888), 331–40.

Without doubt many other socialists, indeed perhaps most, envisioned the future in terms of a revivified rural life, and some variation on the same nostalgia for a self-subsistent ideal which had fuelled Owenism and the Chartist Land Plan in the 1840s and similar later 'back to the land' movements.[318] It was certainly a commonplace amongst socialists that the working classes found little that was 'merrie' in urban life, and would flee back to agrarian autarky whenever circumstances permitted them to do so. The assumption that conspicuous consumption would be replaced by at least a modicum of virtuous abstention from corrosive luxuries in particular in a future society was fairly widespread.[319] A rejection of the sordidness of plebeian urban life also helps to explain Ruskin's enormous influence on the labour movement.[320] Blatchford has been prominently associated with this trend.[321] Morris of course centrally represented such assumptions, as did one of his leading admirers, J. Bruce Glasier, who agreed that townspeople would be much more willing to cultivate the land in future, when assured of 'a worthy reward'.[322]

CONCLUSION

We have seen in this chapter that the starting-point for most socialist analyses of imperialism, whether directly acknowledged as such or filtered through other writers, was that laid down by the Positivists after 1856. That imperialism was highly exploitative, that commercial and financial interests often engineered government policy, that economic pressures in Britain, such as a falling rate of interest, acted continuously to fuel such policies, that negative effects therefrom were evident in Britain itself, were all accepted propositions of Positivist analysis taken up by Hyndman, Bax, many Fabians, Macdonald and others. By the mid-1880s there was an emerging consensus that the 'peer relief' explanation for imperial expansion had become outdated. *Commonweal*, for instance, took issue in 1885 with Seeley's view that the empire had been 'founded in the interest of the

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[318] On the appeal of a more rural vision of Britain in this period see Jan Marsh. *Back to the Land* (1982), and Peter C. Gould. *Early Green Politics* (Brighton, 1988).

[319] There is a useful discussion of these themes in Noel Thompson. 'Socialist Political Economies and the Growth of Mass Consumption in Britain and the United States, 1880 to 1914', *RRPE*, 39 (2007), 230–56.

[320] Ruskin was sometimes quoted for his opposition to imperial expansion; see, e.g., John George Godard. *Patriotism and Ethics* (1901), p. 77, quoting *Time and Tide* on the 'absolute refusal of all selfish advantage and increase of territory or of political power which might otherwise accrue from the victory'.

[321] Gould. *Early Green Politics*, pp. 39–40. [322] *LL* (4 Sep. 1908), 561.

younger sons of aristocratic families', contending instead that 'this is not to see just the very thing about those wars which is most certain and obvious. They were not at all prompted by the lust of empire, and they were waged in the interests, not of the aristocracy, but of the trading classes.' Similarly, a leader in *Commonweal* in 1888 entitled 'The Supremacy of the Financial Aristocracy' noted that the 'lords of usury rule supreme throughout the world. They rule supreme in the councils of the nations, and hold in bondage the wealth-producing millions. They direct and control the press of the world, and the pulpit is everywhere their humble servant.' A caustic critic of the 1897 Jubilee similarly declared that all 'this rhetoric ... about honour and glory, and law and justice ... simply means NEW MARKETS, and nothing more; that the whole bombastic business is just a glorification of commercialism'.[323] Socialists also broadly agreed that the expanding empire had clearly deleterious effects at home. R. B. Cunninghame Graham lamented in the context of the Matabele War in 1896 that

Never before has such a tone of boasting spread over all the nation. Never before have officers and gentlemen entered into such low and base intrigues as the one the world has talked so much about ... never in the history of our race have there been such determined efforts to defeat justice.[324]

So, too, Keir Hardie, writing in the *Labour Leader*, noted that

these men who go out to govern India in this autocratic fashion return in due course to this country and frequently bring with them their imperialistic notions. They are appointed to the command of our police and our defence forces, and are at this moment no small menace to the liberties of the people.[325]

We have also seen in this chapter that socialist opposition to the empire *in principle*, as opposed to its capitalistic excesses, diminished during the Boer War, and was thereafter frequently transformed into the promotion of some form of socialist-imperialist commonwealth ideal. Without doubt socialists saw the South African war as a turning-point. 'We are on the eve of seeing John Bull become John Bull-y abroad,' was John Burns's comment in 1900:

In the past we have been a free, tolerant, non-aggressive people, free and freedom planting ... This policy of trade and non-intervention has altered, and a change has come over our country, statesmen, and people ... The greed of gold, the lust

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[323] *Commonweal* (May 1885), 39; (Apr. 1888), 105; *LL* (17 June 1897), 234.
[324] R. B. Cunninghame Graham. *The Imperial Kailyard* (1896), pp. 11–12.
[325] *LL* (June 1893), 5–6. A noted conservative whose Indian experiences shaped his outlook was Henry Maine; see his *Popular Government* (1886).

of territory, the violent attack of megalomania induced by New Imperialism has completely changed our national ethical aims, and violently affected our political and moral standards. This is instanced by the violent subjection of native races in the Soudan, the subjugation of the semi-savage, and the overpowering of primitive, pastoral white people by the British and American arms in recent years.

Some socialists also thought that the Boer War had been the undoing of the old radicalism. 'The fall of Radicalism', in the words of E. C. Fairchild, was 'the triumph of the capitalist class':

The right of a nation to govern itself in accord with its history and desires was at one time the essence of Radical foreign policy, but the growth of international capitalism has checked the aid given by Radical politicians to nations seeking freedom … The outbreak of war which overthrew the South African Republics, and surrendered half a continent to the world's sordid gold-grabbers, completed the dissolution of all that was noble in the idea of Radicalism.[326]

Was it, however, the case, as Richard Price has argued, that the 'Socialists never attempted to place the war in any wider context; never regarded it as a result of the needs of British capitalism as a whole. The conspiracy theory appealed to both Liberals and Socialists,' a view which he links to the interpretation that the British working classes were not overwhelmingly jingoistic and pro-imperialist, and if anything rather the reverse?[327] Generally speaking, it was not: capitalism had been identified as the key source of imperialism for nearly twenty years in socialist circles. The specific form it assumed in South Africa could be seen as a special 'conspiracy' within this process, here notably by financiers. But this did not displace the pre-existing analysis developed over half a century.

If Blatchford, Macdonald, Hardie, Hyndman, Wells and the Fabians are 'Social-Imperialist', or more properly 'Socialist-Imperialist', they represent a large and very clear majority of socialist opinion in this period, indeed, virtually all of the most influential socialist writers of the day, with the notable exception of Bax. This is not to dispute that there was not much socialist opposition to *capitalist* imperialist exploitation; there was. But we may concede that, in face of the popularity of imperialism, which can be directly linked to a decline in the momentum of socialist growth in this period,[328] giving the empire up was not the option most socialists adopted. They were all too cognizant of criticisms which suggested (here, in 1908, in

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[326] John Burns. *The New Imperialism* (1900), pp. 3–4; E. C. Fairchild. *The Failure of Radicalism* (1907), pp. 15–16.
[327] Price. *An Imperial War*, pp. 70, 237.
[328] E.g., Henry Pelling. *The Origins of the Labour Party 1880–1900* (Oxford, 1965), p. 179.

reference to the SDF) that 'abandoning' India would 'bring about the ruin and beggary of hundreds of thousands of men and women'. And they were well aware of arguments, urged as early as 1888 by Harold Cox, that the Indian National Congress would 'be about the last people' to accept Hyndman's view on Indian withdrawal. Instead, asserted Cox, 'the idea underlying these *National* congresses, the idea of Indian unity, has sprung entirely from British rule and can only be developed by the continuance of British rule', adding that the 'withdrawal of British rule would mean a series of racial and religious wars, followed by a Russian invasion'.[329]

In part this apparent opportunism was a much more deeply seated corollary of the socialists' rejection of Cobdenite non-interventionism. Socialists were, by and large, committed to a novel conception of civilisation based upon universalistic ideals of justice, democracy, social equality and economic non-exploitation. The desire to export these ideals elsewhere was natural; it was also the logical extension of the widespread and heartfelt sympathy for 'oppressed nationalities' which had occupied such a prominent position in labour politics from 1848 onwards. Certainly some socialists worried whether the protection of such nationalities in principle was actually worth the price. Zelda Kahan, writing in 1912, wondered

if the independence of the small nationalities is to be maintained only by the great Powers piling up huge armaments against one another; if it is to be maintained by their perpetual enmity, and, therefore, as an inevitable result, by stirring up the passions of the people of one great country against the other, by sending the masses Empire and jingo mad; then I say the game is not worth the candle, for it defeats its own purpose.[330]

The difference now, however, was that there were many more of these nationalities, most of them were non-European, and Britain itself, rather than some hoary symbol of despotism, could be perceived as their oppressor on a large scale. Many socialists thus moved relatively easily towards a position of seeing the empire as a potential socialist commonwealth, capable of extending the benefits of socialist civilisation to the less developed regions of the world. And Marx's authority, if need be, could also be used to justify such conclusions.

By 1918 many socialists thus came to agree with Harry Snell that 'the old policy of abandonment' was 'out of date', and needed to be replaced by the goal of developing 'the colonial possessions on lines which would enrich and ennoble their native peoples, and prepare them gradually to take their place

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[329] Arnold Foster. *English Socialism of To-Day* (1908), p. 83; *To-Day* (Feb. 1888), 48.
[330] *The British Socialist* (1912), 61.

in the British Commonwealth of Nations'.[331] (But to its critics the new 'elegant phrase' was merely being used to further 'justify their suppression of all freedom for seven-eighths of the peoples of the Empire'.[332]) The advent of the First World War indeed clearly represented a watershed in the debates we have outlined in this chapter. In some respects the war could be seen as the culmination of European divisions which had been widening over past decades, though whether capitalism or German militarism remained the 'real' cause of the conflict remained contentious. As the conflict deepened, however, two somewhat contradictory principles came to the fore. The first was that national self-determination emerged as one of the key issues of the war itself. The second was that without an effort to curb nationalism by limiting sovereignty through some powerful international body, the seeds of future wars would be sown no matter what the outcome of the existing conflict, which of course is exactly what transpired. We will see shortly that Hobson would engage with these issues at length.

The ending of the war also gave the left an opportunity to envision how alternative strategies of mutual development might be applied. In 1918 the Labour Party proclaimed its adherence to

'Home Rule All Round'; the fullest respect for the rights of each people, whatever its colour, to all the Democratic Self-Government of which it is capable, and to the proceeds of its own toil upon the resources of its own territorial home; and to the closest possible co-operation among all the various members of what has become essentially not an Empire in the old sense, but a Britannic Alliance.[333]

It thus proposed a plan to transfer all African colonies to administration by the League of Nations, which would be guided by four principles:

(1) taking account, in each locality, of the wishes of the people, when these can be ascertained; (2) protection of the natives against exploitation and oppression and the preservation of their tribal interests; (3) all revenue raised to be expended for the welfare and development of the African State itself; and (4) the permanent neutralisation of this African State and its abstention from participation in international rivalries or any future wars.[334]

The post-war Labour Party remained broadly committed both to the principle of an independent India and to a commonwealth ideal.[335] It asserted that no people possessed a 'right of incompetence to determine its own fate, for that involves the fate of others . . . all "native" races should

[331] Lord Snell. *Men, Movements and Myself* (1936), p. 211.
[332] R. Palme Dutt. *Empire 'Socialism'* (1925), p. 5.   [333] *Labour and the New Social Order* (1918), p. 22.
[334] Arthur Henderson. *The Aims of Labour* (1918), pp. 187, 106.
[335] E.g., *Labour and the Nation* (2nd edn, 1928), p. 43.

be specially protected by the supervising Government, which should stand for them against the inevitable pressure of white traders and non-native missionaries'. J. H. Thomas cited Chamberlain in underscoring the economic motives for African imperialism, and in *When Labour Rules* (1920) urged 'the preservation of native rights in the land, and the development of native possessions', by contrast with the 'European policy' favouring 'the economic development of the country by European syndicates and European money'. Education and self-government, under general supervision by the League of Nations, were also proposed, with India becoming a 'self-governing dominion within a British Commonwealth'. Labour's general policy was summarised as being to give 'to the natives in all parts of our dominions effective protection against the excess of capitalist colonisation', and 'to create, in all these dependencies, a system of Home Rule, so soon as the degree of civilisation can be attained which will make it possible'.[336] In 1923 the party insisted that a socialist 'World Council' be established with 'power to control and direct the economic development of all those areas in which the native population is incompetent to protect itself against the superior abilities of industrialized peoples'. By 1925 its policy for sub-Saharan Africa emphasised preserving native rights through an 'African' as opposed to a 'European' land policy.[337] That year C. Delisle Burns also declared that imperialism had been 'entirely abolished' from the Labour Movement, and that an avowedly socialist Labour Party rejected imperialism 'because Socialism looks to international peace' and was 'opposed to private advantages gained at the expense of the common good'. Burns emphasised that it was Labour policy not to 'withdraw altogether from the government of undeveloped peoples', but rather 'to give a predominant importance in any land to the native inhabitants'. Whether India, in particular, wanted independence was to be left to Indians, whom it was hoped would not want 'severance from the British Commonwealth of Nations'.[338] A year later, in 1926, an imperial conference declared that Britain and the dominions were freely associated in the 'British Commonwealth of Nations'. In 1937, Clement Attlee, defending a socialist vision of empire, would continue to argue that the 'fact that over a huge area of the earth's surface there is a common sovereignty is advantageous, provided this unity is but a step in a greater unity'.[339]

[336] *The Labour Party's Aim* (1923), pp. 40–1; J. H. Thomas. *When Labour Rules* (1920), pp. 126–39. A similar agenda was offered in *Socialism and the Empire* (1926).
[337] *The Empire in Africa. Labour's Policy* (1925), p. 7.
[338] Herbert Tracey, ed. *The Book of the Labour Party* (3 vols., 1925), vol. III, pp. 69, 71, 75, 80.
[339] *The Labour Party's Aim*, pp. 37, 40–1; Clement Attlee. *The Labour Party in Perspective* (1937), p. 247.

Any promotion of anti-colonial nationalism had, however, to be tempered by the creation of appropriate internationalist institutions for restraining militarism and capitalistic exploitation. Here, for socialists as for Positivists, the League of Nations proved a sore disappointment. 'The first impression produced by a perusal of the League of Nations Covenant', one wrote, 'is that it ought more correctly to be described as a Covenant for the maintenance of world domination in perpetuity by America and the four chief powers of the Entente.' In 1919 it was contended that 'the Covenant of the League of Nations proposes the most formidable engine of resistance to the advance of Socialism and the fulfilment of political democracy in the power of Governments to establish'. The following year, too, the *New Age* insisted that the League's policies had 'been to the last detail dictated and determined by private financial, commercial and capitalist interests'. We can hardly lend support respecting 1918 and the years immediately following, then, to the view expressed by Alfred Cobban, which might appear applicable in 1900, that 'the influence of the socialist movement as a whole, with its cosmopolitan ideas, could hardly be regarded as favourable to the general development of national self-determination'.[340] But these failings did give writers on the left an opportunity to provide an alternative view of how the League should proceed. Fenner Brockway, for instance, indicated in 1920 how a socialist government might handle the struggle of British and American companies for Mesopotamian oil, suggesting that the following terms might prove acceptable:

'We will lend you our capital, and as long as the world continues the practice of paying interest, you shall pay the current rate of interest. We will bring you our technical skill and our engineering and managerial capacity, and you shall pay for them at the proper rates.

'But keep your natural resources as national property. Keep your oil supplies. Keep your minerals. Don't let any capitalist obtain hold of a single foot of your territory.

'In time these natural resources will yield you vast wealth. Use it to construct roads, to rebuild your railways, to open your docks, to develop your cities, to train your teachers, doctors, and technicians, to erect your schools, to establish your universities. Do this, and there is no reason why in two generations your land should not be the most civilised and cultured in the world.

'If you desire advice in political, social, or educational affairs, pay for the services of the best men you can get. But maintain your independence. Work out your own

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[340] *Socialist Review* (Apr.–June 1919), 166; E. C. Fairchild. *Socialism and the League of Nations* (1919), p. 16; *New Age* (8 July 1920), 147; Cobban. *National Self-Determination*, p. 9. Le Bon had accused socialist cosmopolitanism of hastening national decadence. See John Oakesmith. *Race & Nationality* (1919), pp. 21–3.

salvation. Don't get in the economic or political grasp of any capitalist group or alien government.'[341]

How far, then, does the left's embrace of its own variant on imperialism appear inevitable in the circumstances? It has been suggested that socialist imperialism, whether in its cosmopolitan or commonwealth variety, evidenced a deeper linkage between the two phenomena than immediately strikes the eye. The hypothesis that the trend towards collectivism, as it developed from the 1880s to 1914, was an underlying cause of both imperialism and socialism, which thus in some measure shared a common parent and impetus, was floated as early as 1880 in an article entitled 'Imperialism and Socialism'. Its author, Frederic Seebohm, hinted at an intimate, indeed causal, relationship between his two subjects. Seebohm contended that the trend towards 'military empire' tended naturally to produce socialism. As he described the process,

Imperial interests make everything bend to the needs of foreign policy. Home questions are more and more neglected. Popular wrongs go unredressed. The burdens of taxation to support an ever increasing army grow in inverse ratio to the power to bear them. Compulsory military service interferes vexatiously with individual life, commercial education, and the increase of wealth. Life becomes hard to the working classes, and discontent arises with the institutions of the country.

This approach was bolstered by the later suggestion by the Positivist sociologists Victor Branford and Patrick Geddes that the Fabian Society's support for the Boer War demonstrated a more natural and inevitable 'parallelism' between imperialism and socialism than most socialists would comfortably have admitted:

The Socialists, whose philosophy has been the proletarian reflection of the conceptions of 'Empire' held by officials and soldiers (Mass-interests with the socialists, of course, claiming to predominate over Ruler-interests) cannot but help yet further to extend imperial bureaucracies, and to adapt the essential organization of armies to productive functions. True, their enthusiasm of democracy, their insistence upon the struggle of classes, often obscures these martial tendencies, though more to themselves than to their antagonists.

Another way of approaching this issue is to describe socialist antagonism to non-interventionism as having as its corollary a missionary sense of carrying the socialist message to the world at large. As a writer in the *New Age* expressed it in 1907,

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[341] A. Fenner Brockway. *How to End War. ILP View on Imperialism and Internationalism* (1920), p. 10.

Non-intervention was the natural policy of the Cobdenite Radical, who believed that the only object of diplomacy was the promotion of trade … But for the Socialist, who realises that the fate of his most cherished ideals is staked on the event of contests carried on in distant lands and under alien flags, non-intervention would be a suicidal absurdity.[342]

Regardless of our judgement of this interrelationship, which is too complex to enter into more fully here, the chief conclusion of this chapter respects the breadth and complexity of socialist views of empire, and the degree of willingness expressed by many socialists, notably from the Boer War onwards, to contemplate some improved socialist variant upon it. The historiography of the subject, however, is theoretically ill-prepared for such a conclusion. The terminology at present in use is confused, ill-defined and contradictory, and requires clarification in order to move this debate along somewhat. And the field, we have seen, is littered with sacred cows which obstruct easy passage: socialists who are not pacifists are commonly derided as 'militarists', while those not overtly cosmopolitan are condemned as 'chauvinists'. Declamation takes the place of analysis, and our understanding suffers accordingly.

Yet this is not the place to slay sacred cows, either, even if a detour around them appears awkward. Instead, in the first instance, we need to outline what terminology was actually used in the period as well as subsequently. 'Socialist imperialist' was used as early as 1897, in a letter from the economist W. J. Ashley to Graham Wallas noted by Porter. 'Imperial socialist' appears, as does 'imperialistic Socialist'; Hobson employed the phrase 'imperial social democracy' as well as, negatively, 'socialistic imperialism'.[343] The historian Emil Reich in 1905 used the term 'mere philanthropic or socialistic Little Englanderism'. To some, 'Socialist Imperialism, the bastard son of Imperialism, by Quasi-Socialism, born August 1914' was the result of Blatchford's and Hyndman's emphasis on the need to strengthen British defences against Germany.[344] To quite a few others, however, as we have seen, 'Socialist Imperialism' was deployed in a positive sense. Howe has argued that in the degree to which 'social imperialist doctrines gained any substantial foothold in radical circles, it was primarily or only in relation to the settler colonies'. He has also identified a self-conscious group of 'empire

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[342] Frederic Seebohm. 'Imperialism and Socialism', *NC*, 7 (1880), 726–36; Branford and Geddes. *Our Social Inheritance*, pp. 28–9; *NA* (9 May 1907), 17.

[343] Porter. *Critics*, p. 109; H. G. Wells. *What are We to Do with our Lives?* (1935), p. 122; John M. Robertson. *Patriotism and Empire* (3rd edn, 1900), p. 192; J. A. Hobson. *Democracy after the War* (1917), p. 196.

[344] Reich. *Imperialism*, p. 169; *The Socialist* (Feb. 1915), 48.

socialists', but these were not active until the mid-1920s.[345] Semmel largely adopts Neumann's terminology in defining 'social imperialism' (coined *c*.1917) as an attempt by the ruling classes to incorporate the working classes into an imperial system,[346] as does George Lichtheim to describe working-class support for empire. Semmel also uses the term 'imperial-socialists' to describe the Fabians and Blatchford, and lumps the Fabians and Blatchford together as 'nationalists, militarists, and imperialists'.[347]

Clearly, then, we need to distinguish between a variety of strands of actual 'socialist imperialism', a vaguer 'social imperialism' not associated with socialists, and an 'anti-imperialism' which accepted neither of these strategies nor the moral validity of capitalist imperialism. Delineating a spectrum of socialist opinion respecting empire between 1880 and 1920 involves considering, as we have seen, a range of positions from extreme cosmopolitan interventionism to nationalist non-interventionism. Within these positions, we have noted divisions over nationalism, patriotism, armaments and self-defence, cosmopolitanism and internationalism, race, religion, civilisation, the rights of 'advanced' states to colonise and develop the less advanced, and so on. We can also posit that one possible way of defining the 'imperialist' component shared by both capitalist and socialist variations is the degree to which *compulsory* trade and exploitation – *pace* Vattel – is permitted or enjoined. From this perspective not all forms even of self-defined 'socialist imperialism' were equally imperialist. Another way of approaching the 'imperialist' component is the degree to which exploitation was proposed to be vested in (supervised) private hands, as opposed to managed directly by governments or international bodies. (But the experience of government-managed nationalised land in British India is germane here.)

Finally, we have described in this chapter the deeply divisive and often confused debate which took place over the issue of nationalism, and the often anguished efforts of socialists to reconcile traditional radical sympathies for *bona fide* movements of liberation from foreign rule with the palpable need to create internationalist organisations which would reduce national conflict and unify working-class movements across national

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[345] Howe. *Anticolonialism*, pp. 32, 48.

[346] Semmel. *Free Trade Imperialism*, pp. 13, 64–82, 128–40, a process chiefly associated in Britain with Joseph Chamberlain.

[347] George Lichtheim. *Imperialism* (1971), p. 90; Semmel. *Free Trade Imperialism*, pp. 234, 27. Under this label he includes the view that they were 'nationalists who vied with each other in the intensity with which each proclaimed himself a Briton … who scoffed at Cobdenite or socialist proclamations of international friendship' (p. 235), which hardly describes Shaw and caricatures Blatchford. 'Imperial socialist' is also used by J. H. Grainger. *Patriotisms. Britain 1900–1939* (1986), p. 156.

boundaries. The suggestion that any wedding of socialism to nationalism is *ipso facto* illegitimate has of course its later proponents. Hugh Cunningham, for instance, has written of the 'distinctively socialist' form of opposition at the time of the Boer War that 'to the claims of nation it counterposed those of class'. He has also insisted of both Hyndman's and Blatchford's views that in an age of imperialism 'it was impossible to demarcate a patriotism of the left; the language had passed to the right and those who employed it did so too'. This now seems to be a muddled account of events driven by ideological wishful thinking. Some socialists, like J. Bruce Glasier, were clearly willing to term 'national or patriotic sentiment ... an expression of social emotion', to deny that patriotism was merely 'an ignorant and selfish sentiment', and to define it instead as a 'civic devotion ... which leads men irresistibly to sacrifice their own small lives for the larger life and social progress of the race'. But, they emphasised, such sentiments had to be reconciled with 'the greater international unity of the United States of Europe, and of the world'.[348]

But there was in any case no 'distinctive' socialist response to empire based upon class or nation or socialist cosmopolitanism or internationalism. Most socialists did share the view that European civilisation was undoubtedly superior to that of the rest of the world. But many were unwilling to impose this upon others. What united the socialists was a resolute opposition to *capitalist* imperialism. What divided them more than anything else was the issue as to whether a socialist empire, dominated by ideals associated with British national consciousness, was preferable to letting go of the empire as speedily as possible. For most socialists, there was no manifest contradiction in adopting the former position. If socialism was the highest stage of human aspiration, assisting others to reach it could hardly be wrong, or mistaken for an extension of exploitative capitalist imperialism. If native rights were protected, punitive labour regimes avoided and the development of resources carefully monitored to ensure their benefits were shared, it was possible to envision transforming capitalist imperialism into a socialist commonwealth. We will now see that this is exactly what John Hobson came to propose in the most famous treatment of the subject of the period.

[348] Hugh Cunningham. 'The Language of Patriotism', in Raphael Samuel, ed., *Patriotism* (3 vols., 1989), vol. I, p. 81; Glasier. *Socialism*, pp. 193–4, 201.

Contextualising Hobson: civilisation, utility and socialist imperialism

We saw at the outset of this book that J. A. Hobson's *Imperialism* (1902) is often taken as the starting-point of anti-imperialist thought in Britain. Let us recall A. J. P. Taylor's claim that Hobson's

discovery was an off-shoot from his general doctrine of under-consumption. The capitalists cannot spend their share of the national production. Saving makes their predicament worse. They demand openings for investment outside their saturated national market; and they find these openings in the undeveloped parts of the world. This is Imperialism ... Yet the earlier Radical opponents of Imperialism knew nothing of it. They supposed that Imperialism sprang from a primitive greed for territory or a lust for conquest.

So, too, Wolfgang Mommsen, who wrote that Hobson 'deserves credit for being the first to point out the link between imperialism and social structure on the one hand and economic factors on the other'.[1] Most accounts of *Imperialism* share similar assumptions, and shed little or no light on criticisms of empire beforehand, or do so chiefly in reference to Marx.[2] Some see Hobson as explaining events only from the mid-1890s onwards (and possibly indebted to other authors), and thus marking a new phase in the development of finance capitalism rather than a more aggressive stage of colonial expansionism originating earlier.[3] Nor, as we saw in chapter 2, do

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[1] A. J. P. Taylor. *Englishmen and Others* (1956), p. 76; Wolfgang J. Mommsen. *Theories of Imperialism* (1980), p. 18.
[2] E.g., Alan Hodgart. *The Economics of European Imperialism* (1977), pp. 25–43.
[3] This is the thrust of Etherington's assertion of Hobson's debt to the American socialist H. G. Wilshire, a view rejected by P. J. Cain. See Norman Etherington. 'Theories of Imperialism in Southern Africa Revisited', *AA*, 81 (1982), 385–407; Etherington. 'Reconsidering Theories of Imperialism', *H&T*, 21 (1982), 19–22; P. J. Cain. *Hobson and Imperialism* (Oxford, 2002), p. 111n; Cain. 'Hobson, Wilshire, and the Capitalist Theory of Capitalist Imperialism', *HPE*, 17 (1985), 455–60; Cain. 'J. A. Hobson, Financial Capitalism, and Imperialism in Late Victorian and Edwardian England', *JICH*, 13 (1985), 6. This controversy centres on Hobson's writings from 1898 onwards, though Hobson had met Wilshire several times as early as 1896 (Fabian Society Papers, 7/3/40). See further P. J. Cain. 'British Radicalism, the South African Crisis, and the Origins of the Theory of Financial Imperialism', in David Omissi and Andrew S. Thompson, eds., *The Impact of the South African War* (2002), pp. 173–93.

analyses of socialist anti-imperialism which take Hobson as their point of departure say much about his predecessors.[4]

This chapter will re-examine the chief arguments of *Imperialism* in relation to the narrative so far. It seeks centrally to try to position Hobson in light of what we have seen was a vibrant debate about both the evils of capitalist imperialism and the prospect of an enlightened socialist alternative to it, which intensified greatly in the late 1890s. We will here need to ascertain how far both the Positivist and socialist antecedents examined so far provide a new context for reassessing Hobson's leading claims, and in particular how close to the Fabian and other 'socialist-imperialist' positions he was. In addition, we will consider the development of Hobson's ideas of international government after *Imperialism* in an effort to understand how his 'humanist' perspective matched Positivist efforts, in particular, to describe an ethical ideal of humanity signifying an obligation superior to that of the nation. This made an 'international patriotism' possible from a moral standpoint, and provided a philosophic basis for allegiance to international government. We will accordingly want here to consider whether Hobson regarded as satisfactory an 'organic', empirical argument which described an essential convergence of human interests and aspirations growing out of the process of modernisation generally, or whether he felt this needed to be supplemented by a higher ethical ideal, and if so, what this consisted of.

THE FORMATION OF HOBSON'S CRITIQUE OF CAPITALIST IMPERIALISM, 1894–1902

Before examining *Imperialism*, it is worth briefly tracing the trajectory of Hobson's earlier writing in order to understand the starting-point of his most famous book. Born in Derby in 1858, the son of a liberal newspaper proprietor, Hobson attended Oxford University, became interested in political economy, and began to move away from the laissez-faire orthodoxy of the high Victorian period. His first major work, written with A. F. Mummery, was *The Physiology of Industry* (1889), which developed the 'oversaving' hypothesis, largely dormant after Malthus, which would reappear in *Imperialism*, and to which Mummery converted

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[4] Porter, however, remains useful for his sketch of Hobson's relations with the Rainbow Circle in particular (*Critics*, pp. 156–68), and on his relations with Macdonald (pp. 176–90). See also Georgina D. Duncan. 'British Anti-Imperialism towards South Africa, 1895–1910', PhD thesis, University of Liverpool, 1971, pp. 378–416, which claims that 'Anti-imperialist ideology originated in England, and its prophet was John Atkinson Hobson' (p. 415).

Hobson.[5] Employed as a lecturer and active in the Ethical movement and on the fringes of various socialist organisations in the early 1890s, Hobson became increasingly restive respecting British foreign policy. Sent as a correspondent to South Africa during the Boer War, he soon achieved renown as the most famous anti-imperialist of his day.[6]

As a leading Hobson specialist, Peter Cain, has indicated, however, Hobson did not commence his career hostile to empire, but endorsed common imperialist sentiments in the late 1880s, supporting union with Ireland and advocating 'commercial advances' on China, even proclaiming that the 'opening of the vast Chinese Empire to European trade would be the greatest event since the discovery of America … Think what a market for English manufactures if it could be opened!'[7] By 1892, however, he was beginning to question the process by which annexation followed penetration of native lands by missionaries and traders. His perspective, according to Cain, began to shift specifically as a result of the Jameson Raid in late 1895, behind which he glimpsed the hand of Cecil Rhodes and a 'stock-jobbing imperialism', and which provoked in Hobson an increasing sense of moral outrage. By 1895 he proclaimed that the principle of 'Home Rule all round' had 'superior logical advantages', though in the context of imperial federation. His radicalism then deepened as he moved into the *Progressive Review* circle, which included William Clarke, J. R. Macdonald and Herbert Samuel, from 1896 onwards, the journal for Macdonald having a precedent in 'the later Radical and Positivist movements found in the original Fortnightly'.[8] Hobson's own first direct encounter with Positivism evidently came with two visits to London, in 1888 and 1890, when he visited both Harrison's and Congreve's establishments, and noted that Comte had 'exerted so much influence upon English thinkers and writers'.[9]

Hobson's first substantial contribution to the growing debate over imperialism was the anonymously published 'Ethics of Empire', which

[5] See generally Erwin Esser Nemmers. *Hobson and Underconsumptionism* (Amsterdam, 1956); W. H. Richmond. 'John A. Hobson: Economic Heretic', *AJES*, 37 (1978), 283–94.

[6] Although this was as a consequence of his work as a whole, not *Imperialism* single-handedly, which for G. D. H. Cole was 'largely neglected at the time of its appearance' (*EJ*, 50, 1940, 356). The most comprehensive general account of Hobson is A. J. F. Lee. 'A Study of … J. A. Hobson', PhD thesis, University of London, 1970, though it does not assess Comtean anti-imperialism and uses the term 'positivists' in a confusing manner (e.g., vol. II, p. 527).

[7] Quoted in Cain. *Hobson*, p. 54.

[8] *DA* (8 Feb. 1895), 8; Samuel Papers, SAM/A/10/2. Cain had earlier posited that before Hobson, radicals like William Clarke 'forged no link between industrial capitalism, finance, and imperialism' ('J. A. Hobson, Cobdenism, and … Imperialism, 1898–1914', *EHR*, 312, 1978, 567). See generally Lee. 'Hobson', vol. II, pp. 472–80.

[9] *DA* (4 Apr. 1890), 8.

appeared in the *Progressive Review* in August 1897. This article laid much of the ground which Hobson would continue to occupy respecting the empire for the rest of his life. It rejected the British equivalent of the 'Manifest Destiny' doctrine, as well as the implication that 'bigness' was equivalent to 'greatness'. Instead, contended Hobson, there was only one 'ethical defence of empire, that it contributes to the elevation of humanity, to the fulfilment of a rational cosmic plan'. This meant that 'it extends the bounds of civilisation, educates lower races in the arts of government and commerce, and lifts the level of material comfort and moral conduct in the world'. 'Civilisation' here meant first and foremost economic development. Hobson now floated the argument – familiar to us from Vattel – which would be central to *Imperialism*'s utilitarian justification of 'sane' imperialism. He asserted that 'the mere fact of the present occupation of a land by a people confers no right of using and abusing their power valid against the outside world. No absolute ownership of land vests in the particular aggregation of persons who occupy it.' He insisted that if 'a land capable of yielding a large supply of food is held by a nation too feeble or too ignorant to utilise its powers, their occupation is not defensible against the pressure of the needs of humanity'.[10] Thus, to Hobson, 'social utility in the largest sense, the good of humanity', was the test of whether 'low races' should occupy any territory, and the 'claim that our occupation of such lands is a service to humanity by providing a better utilisation of their resources has a *prima facie* validity'. But if 'the attempted performance of this social duty involves an excessive corpulency of the body politic, and a consequent enfeeblement of national vitality, this waste must be set off against the prospective gain'. Hobson admitted that there were problems with this proposition, which, as we have seen, other critics of empire were wrestling with in the same period.[11] The countries making it were all self-interested. They could appeal to no higher authority even if they were so inclined. There was, moreover, no certainty that one type of civilisation was markedly 'higher' than another over the long run:

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[10] 'Nemo.' 'The Ethics of Empire', *Prog. Rev.*, 11 (1897), 452–5. 'Nemo' may refer to the maverick inventor Captain Nemo in Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* (1873), who wages war against war and is vehemently anti-slavery. See generally Porter. *Critics*, pp. 176–89.

[11] Shaw for instance had said that 'Nature is not an Anglo-Saxon: she gives the waste places of the earth to the great Powers, but is quite impartial as to which particular Power shall have which particular waste place' (*Fabian News*, Mar. 1900, 3). G. K. Chesterton was quoted as saying after the Boers had been defeated that the South African republic was 'far less the common property of the whole world than it will be now that it is incorporated in the British Empire' (*LL*, 26 July 1901, 235).

We cannot know what types are ultimately most serviceable. But we shall not sanction the claim of quick-growing types to crush and to displace all slower-growing types, still less shall we encourage a tendency to allow a few types to become dominant over the earth. The idea of uniformity is doubly fallacious, first because it assumes that one form of civilisation, that of Western Europe, is absolutely best, and therefore should be imposed on all the world; secondly, because it ignores the advantage of variety of species in the furtherance of the evolution of a complex humanity.[12]

This perspective, which Cain, following Porter, terms Hobson's 'emerging cultural relativism', has been linked to the pioneering work of the Africanist Mary Kingsley, who was cited by Hobson.[13] The use of evolutionary language indicates that it can also be seen as indebted to, if not rooted in, a quasi-biological standpoint, for Hobson had acknowledged in an 1895 review of Benjamin Kidd's *Social Evolution* that 'the claim of the wider social organism' upon its constituent parts needed to be acknowledged, though he dissented strongly from Kidd's particular nostrums for satisfying this demand.[14] (Later they would collaborate in forming the Sociological Society.[15]) Nor did this imply that the existing empire was unsatisfactory in this regard. Yet, in the instance of India, Hobson insisted – against what we have seen was most prominently Hyndman's 'drain' theory – that

Bad as we believe the government of India to be, it was probably worse; poverty-stricken and tax-ridden as India now is, it was probably poorer; it is even possible that the scourges of plague and famine have been more terrible or more frequent in the past. Taking a commercial, or even a short-range humanitarian, application of the standard of utility, the case for British rule is indisputably strong.[16]

Yet this too Hobson balanced with the view that coercive rule showed no signs of ending, or being mitigated by the promotion of education. He also expressed concern that 'the progress of territorial expansion is absorbing more and more of the time and energy needed by such a country as England for purposes of domestic reform'. 'No general ethical sanction', Hobson concluded, could thus 'be accorded to a policy of expansion based upon the claims of a mission to extend the bounds of civilisation. The special circumstances of each proposed increase of Empire should . . . be considered on

[12] 'The Ethics of Empire', 448–62.
[13] Cain. *Hobson*, p. 66. Porter (*Critics*, pp. 181–2) asserts that this ideal 'arose naturally' from Positivism. On Kingsley's ideals and their context, see Rich. *Race and Empire*, pp. 29–30.
[14] J. A. Hobson. 'Mr Kidd's "Social Evolution"', *AJS*, 1 (1895), 302. Hobson lectured on the book in 1894 to the Ethical Society (Kidd Papers, C105).
[15] *PR* (1903), 206.
[16] 'The Ethics of Empire', 448–62. He later noted that 'no doubt the taxation of the people was quite as heavy under the rule of native princes before we came' (*MG*, 30 Sep. 1901, 7).

their merits.' And there was a further argument against extensive empire as such. Clearly reminiscent of the Positivist line on this issue was Hobson's suggestion that

the higher influences, the artistic, intellectual and spiritual forces ... can radiate from a small centre and can illumine the widest area. Athens, Palestine, Phoenicia, Holland and the Italian Republics, in their brightest days, were small states in territory, but their influence in moulding the history of the world has been prodigious ... the achievements of these states are directly associated with a compactness of area that induced the greatest social efficiency, and ... when territorial narrowness gave way before a lust for empire and parasitic practices the seeds of decay were sown.

There was, Hobson concluded, 'much to indicate that the force of nationalism is enfeebled and dissipated by a policy of empire', and that this justified the 'little Englanders' 'desire to see England's power confined within the narrowest area'.[17] Yet there is no reason to classify Hobson's views here as those of a 'Little Englander'. 'Civilisation' *might* justify empire; common economic interest, broadly cast in utilitarian terms, certainly did so, though not without reservations.

Over the next three years Hobson wrote a series of articles which would form the basis of *Imperialism*. In 'Free Trade and Foreign Policy' (1898), he first asserted that oversaving created competition for foreign investments, and clearly identified for the first time the harm that imperialism had caused in terms of retarding vital domestic economic, political and social reforms. Here he used a largely Cobdenite argument to contend that the 'use of the instruments of force in order to win foreign trade is a violation of the primary principles of Free Trade'. Denying that 'our national prosperity demands a constant expansion of external markets', Hobson urged that 'home trade is a more solid and substantial basis of industrial prosperity'. The choice, he concluded, lay

between external expansion of markets and of territory on the one hand, and internal social and industrial reforms on the other; between a militant imperialism animated by the lust for quantitative growth as a means by which the governing and possessing classes may retain their monopoly of political power and industrial supremacy, and a peaceful democracy engaged upon the development of its national resources in order to secure for all its members the conditions of improved comfort, security, and leisure essential for a good life.[18]

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[17] 'The Ethics of Empire', 460–1. Hobson also wrote that he was 'genuinely interested' in the ideas of a new periodical, *Nationality. Advocating the Interests of the Small Nationalities of the World* (no. 1, Oct. 1900, 8).
[18] Hobson. 'Free Trade and Foreign Policy', *CR*, 74 (1898), 167–8, 174–9.

In 1899–1900 Hobson also contributed an extensive series of articles to the *New Age*, in which, under the title 'Liberalism or Imperialism?', he outlined the danger of expansionism. The theme here, again, was essentially the political dangers of imperial extension, and its propensity, if not indeed design, of averting necessary reforms at home. 'In the elaborate bureaucracy which Imperialism demands', he insisted, 'the will of the people which is supposed to govern is therefore usurped by the will of a small class of professional politicians and permanent officials.' Thus every 'increase of the size of Empire gives more power to officials and less power to the people'. Parliament, as a consequence, was 'being dethroned, and the domination of a Cabinet, not even indirectly chosen by the people, or by the party whose policy it claims to represent, but by the Monarchy under pressure of various personal and social forces', was instead 'established in the seat of authority'. The resulting high politics demanded 'swift, secret, treacherous, high-handed methods, and these belong to a close official oligarchy, and not to popular government'. Consequently the 'maxim, "Live openly"' (a Positivist slogan, we should note) was 'patently impossible for Imperialism. The judgment, voice and vote of the ordinary citizen cannot intrude into regions of politics where secrecy is held to be essential.'[19] Warning that in 'Egypt, in South Africa, in China, and elsewhere, financiers and trading adventurers seek to use the purse and the strong arm of Government in order to secure for themselves opportunities of profitable speculation', Hobson contrasted this to what he may have regarded as a Cobdenite ideal, where

Trade is not to be regarded as the be-all and end-all of internationalism; the appeal is not merely to enlightened self-interest in the pursuit of material gains. The economic bond among nations, as among individuals, is only the first and most serviceable means of promoting international acquaintance and good will, which shall bear fruit in . . . a gradual effective realisation of human brotherhood.

In further articles Hobson warned that if Britain pursued 'Imperialism to its logical completeness', its fate would be 'inevitably that of Rome': autocracy would be 'enthroned in the seats of so-called democracy; the tone and temper of militarism must override industrialism; the wealth and energy of the people must be directed by the arbitrary will of governing cliques of politicians and financiers towards a continual enlargement of their area of power'. In early 1901, then, he argued that if the choice lay between imperialism and socialism, the latter did

[19] *NA* (2 Mar. 1899), 84–5; (9 Mar. 1900), 100.

not imply a mere regimentation of industry by the people for the people, but the growing self-realisation of the people's will in communities of such sorts and sizes as are found best suited to secure for all the best life they are capable of living, every man and woman consciously sharing in the government and every other function of the common life, and valuing that life not by the area of land on which it is supported or the number of persons of which it consists, but upon the vigour, the constant capacity of progress and self-satisfaction it expresses.

At this time he found himself witness to the Fabian controversy, having first been the butt of criticism in the Rainbow Circle discussion club, whose collective task was to establish 'the reasons why the old Philosophic Radicalism and the Manchester School of Economics can no longer furnish a ground of action in the political sphere' and (in Macdonald's words) 'to formulate some consistent body of political thought in keeping with democratic tendencies'. The Circle took him to task in June 1899 for having 'exaggerated the part played by Imperialism', the objection being offered that 'as we had an empire & could not get rid of it, the profitable thing to discuss was not whether we should have any Imperialism but what the characteristics of a good kind of Imperialism are'.[20] This was indeed precisely the view Hobson would move towards. For, like so many others, the social, political and intellectual confrontations of the next three years would force him to re-examine his central assumptions about empire.

In late 1899, when the Boer War broke out, Hobson spent several months reporting on the conflict. *The War in South Africa* (1900) blamed its origins chiefly on the Rand capitalists, 'a small international oligarchy of mine-owners and speculators'. It did not develop a general analysis of imperialism, but sought instead to explain how British grievances had been blown out of proportion in order to create a *casus belli*. Hobson also described the war as 'press-made'. In *The Psychology of Jingoism* (1901) he analysed the growth and manipulation of the war spirit, that 'inverted patriotism whereby the love of one's own nation is transformed into the hatred of another nation', ascribing it to a combination of the growing crowd mentality of the urban masses, which mimicked a reversion to savagery and blood-lust, and the pandering to unreason by a press owned by the same financial interests.[21] A 1900 article, 'Capitalism and Imperialism in South Africa',[22] strongly linked imperialism to underconsumptionism, and suggested that the drive

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[20] Samuel Papers, SAM/A/10; *NA* (16 Mar. 1900), 116–17; (30 Mar. 1900), 148–9; (3 Jan. 1901), pp. 3–4; Kidd Papers, M3; Michael Freeden, ed. *Minutes of the Rainbow Circle, 1894–1924* (1989), pp. 68–9.

[21] Hobson. *The War in South Africa* (2nd edn, 1900), pp. 189, 197–8; Hobson. *The Psychology of Jingoism* (1901), pp. 1, 7.

[22] *CR*, 76 (Jan. 1900).

for political rule over new territories grew out of economic necessity, specifically the desire of the mine owners and shareholders to consolidate their assets. Hobson also assessed the relationship between the newly defined majority Fabian position and his own views in a 1901 contribution to the *International Journal of Ethics*. Here he asserted that supporters of the South African war rested their claims upon two assumptions. Firstly,

if a nation or the government of a nation holding possession of a piece of territory refuses to utilize fully its resources or to permit others to do so or otherwise makes itself a nuisance to its neighbors, or to the international public, the sacred rights of nationality ought not to protect it from coercion imposed on behalf of the general good of nations.

Perhaps surprisingly, given the sweeping mandate it potentially implied, Hobson accepted this argument. And we should not only note his use of the term 'coercion' here, but recall that this was no vain threat at the time: the Tibetans' efforts to 'thwart trade' was one of the pretexts for Tibet's invasion by Britain in 1903, in which at least two to three thousand died.[23] The long history of British incursions in China had in fact been dominated by the same theme, namely prising open China's markets against its will, and specifically forcing upon it a hugely profitable and utterly unwelcome opium trade. But Hobson did not accept this argument quite unequivocably, since he contended that the justification for such interference could only lie with the arbitration of a disinterested international body. Nor would he concede that Britain had in fact been actuated by such motives in the case of the Transvaal. Secondly, he considered the contention that, based upon a similar 'law' governing capitalist industrial enterprises,

small states federate or combine, big states swallow and absorb their smaller or weaker neighbors; a few big empires rapidly extend their areas, putting down the constant internecine struggles and substituting a rivalry of a few great political bodies which only indulge in occasional warfare, and which, in time, when the whole desirable territory of the earth is partitioned between them, will come to terms with one another and secure a peaceful federation of the world.

This assertion Hobson regarded with much more suspicion. He stressed that the 'notion that there are certain common brands of "justice," "freedom," "civilization," which can profitably, or even possibly, be imposed upon widely divergent types of peoples so as to satisfy their needs, is a dangerous fallacy'. 'Devolution of power from a central government, always accompanied by forcible retention of a central veto, while complicating the

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[23] Edmund Candler. *The Unveiling of Lhasa* (1905), p. 19.

mechanism of the single machine', he also contended, did 'not confer that true freedom of local will that is essential to sound government of the "federal" type'. The crucial problem, 'this central vice of Empire', was for Hobson indicated by the fact that 'the "business" view of economy of government ignores nationality … To them nationality is little better than a silly sentiment.' Instead, asserted Hobson, who could have been arguing as much against Bax or Shaw, and whose distance from the Fabians in particular on this point thus needs to be underscored:[24]

By breaking down the form of nationality in small peoples, and by seeking to break the spirit of it, we are destroying the most essential means of attaining in the future that solid federation of all civilized peoples which is the only hopeful security against the recrudescence of barbarism in the shape of war. As in certain parts of the ancient world there sprang up the City State, representing the best form of society then attainable, so our age is distinctively that of the Nation State, or, one may rightly add, the small nation-state.

Let us scrutinise more carefully how Hobson presented this argument, for the language is identical to and was almost certainly derived from that of the Positivists' 'civic' defence of the city-state principle:

That same quality of present nearness, neighborhood, which is the very essence of civic life, is also essential, though in a somewhat different way, to effective nationality. A militant Imperialism can cultivate and maintain a false form of *exclusive* nationalism which has its essence in hostility towards other nations, but a true *inclusive* nationalism demands the possibility of such personal relations among the members and classes of which a nation is composed, as shall yield a vigorous moral bond of sympathy. A small nation, with some approximate equality of economic and social conditions, can alone yield this moral basis of union.[25]

This theory of nationality, and Hobson's civic psychology, undoubtedly owed something to Positivism.

In 'The Scientific Basis of Imperialism', published in 1902, Hobson examined in detail the biological argument for keeping up the efficiency of races by war, notably as represented by Karl Pearson. Here he termed imperialism 'nothing but this natural-history doctrine regarded from the

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[24] Porter sees Hobson's opposition to 'atomistic nationalism' as akin to that of Sidney Webb and Shaw, without drawing out their differences respecting other forms of nationalism (*Critics*, p. 117). Elsewhere Porter contends that there was not much difference between Hobson's views and Shaw's, both being driven by a commitment to 'efficiency', but does not discuss their very different approaches to nationalism (*The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, pp. 214–15).

[25] Hobson. 'Socialistic Imperialism', *IJE*, 12 (1901–2), 59, 55. To speak of Hobson's 'aversion to nationalism' is thus clearly misconceived (Stefan Berger. 'British and German Socialists between Class and National Solidarity', in Berger and Angel Smith, eds., *Nationalism, Labour and Ethnicity 1870–1939*, Manchester, 1999, p. 43).

standpoint of one's own nation. We represent the socially most efficient nation; we have conquered and acquired dominion in the past: we must go on; it is our destiny.' Pearson had proclaimed 'our right to work the unutilised resources of the earth, be they in Africa or Asia'. Hobson did not deny this right, but insisted that 'military and commercial warfare between nations … test very poorly the lowest forms of fitness that are the least characteristic expressions of nationalism'. He proposed instead substituting 'the struggle of moral, intellectual and aesthetic ideas and institutions, which best test the higher forms of fitness that are the most characteristic expressions of nationalism'. Then he urged a 'federation of civilized nations' to prevent the danger of the 'white races, discarding labor in its more arduous forms' and living 'as a sort of world-aristocracy upon the exploitation of the "lower races", while they hand over the policing of the world more and more to members of these same races'. The final component of *Imperialism* appeared as a *Contemporary Review* article of 1902, 'The Economic Taproot of Imperialism', which laid out the case for seeing the pressure for external investment as the basic cause of the most recent surge of militaristic adventurism.[26] The oversaving argument of 1894 was now fully wedded to the politics of the Boer struggle.

IMPERIALISM. A STUDY: CIVILISATION AND EXPLOITATION JUSTIFIED

Prior to *Imperialism*, then, Hobson had acknowledged his agreement that some form of imperialism could be defended upon a civilisational, and even more upon an economic, utilitarian basis. He had not suggested the means by which arbitrating between existing imperial claims might proceed, only that this was demanded by the need to continue exploiting raw materials. He had also not resolved how the problem of a higher ethical standpoint than that of national interest might be substantiated, only that it had to be. But as early as the spring of 1898, the *Ethical World*, which Hobson co-edited with Stanton Coit, had spoken of 'the heart of true Imperialism, the substitution of an ethical and economic bond for the ties of political coercion'.[27] *Imperialism*, then, had to solve both these problems if any apology for a higher form of dominion was to appear plausible.

Hobson's case in *Imperialism* may be divided into economic, political and 'psychical' components, or an accounting of the causes and motives

[26] Hobson. 'The Scientific Basis of Imperialism', *PSQ*, 17 (1902), 460–89; Hobson. 'The Economic Taproot of Imperialism', *CR*, 82 (1902), 219–32.
[27] *EW* (18 Mar. 1898), 177.

behind empires; and the provision of a solution. The root causes of imperialism generally were, briefly, twofold: the first was oversaving or underspending, which produced a constant impulse to search for new markets, the argument he had suggested in 1894.[28] These markets expanded with imperialism, but such growth for Hobson chiefly took place not with colonies and dependencies, but with other major trading partners. Fuelling imperial conquest in particular were certain 'definite business and professional interests feeding upon imperialistic expenditure, or upon the results of that expenditure'. These were 'thus set up in opposition to the common good, and, instinctively feeling their way to one another, are found united in strong sympathy to support every new imperialist exploit'. 'The wealth of these houses, the scale of their operations, and their cosmopolitan organisation make them the prime determinants of imperial policy. They have the largest definite stake in the business of Imperialism, and the amplest means of forcing their will upon the policy of nations.' Hence 'the modern foreign policy of Great Britain has been primarily a struggle for profitable markets of investment'. Secondly, the popular cause of imperialism was not the lust for commercial gain, but lay in mass psychology. 'Power, pride, prestige' were now the 'prevailing sentiments in an imperialist policy'.[29]

How original was this description of imperialism? The economic side of Hobson's explanation was, if more sophisticated, methodical and carefully crafted, none the less the stock-in-trade of both Positivist and much socialist argument, built up over the previous half-century. Not only had a broadly commercial explanation of imperialism been established previously, but the linkage of a financial explanation to underconsumptionism and the export of surplus capital in particular had been made much earlier, if less systematically. This has already been suggested elsewhere. Porter asserts that the 'economic' or 'surplus capital' explanation had been 'common knowledge both to Radicals and to imperialists for years', while Cain concedes that Hobson was aware of financial explanations for Britain's invasion of Egypt in 1882, though as we have seen Hobson did not accept that the 'drain' from India was worse than it had been before British rule.[30] Yet it is important to stress that Hobson's structural account did not entail a monocausal, reductionist

[28] A. F. Mummery and J. A. Hobson. *The Physiology of Industry* (1889). It has been suggested that Hobson's general account of imperialism, the result of his economic studies, presented a different view of the subject from his study of South Africa. See David Long. *Towards a New Liberal Internationalism. The International Theory of J. A. Hobson* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 93.

[29] Hobson. *Imperialism. A Study* (3rd edn, 1938), pp. 48, 53, viii.

[30] Porter. *Critics*, p. 41; Cain. *Hobson*, p. 256. Porter suggests that Hobson's originality lay in the argument that the empire was unprofitable as such, rather than in seeing underconsumptionism as its leading cause.

insistence that all imperialism was caused by either the ineluctable development of capitalism or the primacy of financial motives in individual actors. Like some Positivists he accepted a variety of conspiracy theory respecting the role of financiers, particularly Jews, in the South African war, indeed insisting respecting the 'Jew-gamblers' that 'it is not possible rightly to comprehend the methods employed, unless the race-basis of this financial business is understood to be a fact'. Some have seen this as quite separate from his economic explanation. Indeed to Porter the 'conspiracy theory' functions to 'bolster up the deficiencies in his "economic model"', and ends up being 'the real flaw in Hobson's argument'. This is because it falsely ascribes a central role to a group whose crucial influence Porter then boldly denies as the imposition of an *a priori* assumption about class interest upon a vastly more complex scenario, as if finance capitalists in principle lacked the ability to foster wars or to destroy a nation's economy through sheer greed. The real, underlying motive here, for Porter, is 'sentiment' rather than interest; Hobson's account is overly rational in imputing actions to class motives.[31] But Hobson did not ascribe all individual actions to economic motives. In the case of Cecil Rhodes, for instance, he insisted that Rhodes had not been actuated solely by 'purely financial considerations', but also possessed 'some large indefinite desire to express his personality in what is termed "empire-building"'. Writing in 1917 of the South African war, too, he similarly stressed that respecting Chamberlain, Rhodes and Lord Milner, 'the idea of imperial expansion doubtless coalesced with the sense of personal ambition', but 'distinctively economic gains either for themselves or for others played no determinant part'. As late as 1939, too, he would reiterate that

A psychological analysis of this nationalism shows that it is an amalgam of the class-gains from imperial exploitation, tariffs and other trade preferences, the power, place and prestige of politicians who represent the nation at home and abroad, and finally, the collective egoism of races, character and colour which divides nations into superiors and inferiors.[32]

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[31] *NA* (9 Jan. 1902), 25; Porter. *Critics*, pp. 215, 218–23. But Porter does seemingly view the invasion of Egypt in 1882 as the result of 'bondholders" interests (p. 42). Hobson asserted that 'irrational from the standpoint of the whole nation, it is rational enough from the standpoint of certain classes in the nation' (*Imperialism*, p. 47). Harrison praised Hobson for blaming the South African war on 'a ring of international financiers, mostly Jewish, and only in part British' ('Mr Hobson on the Transvaal', *PR*, 8, 1900, 69–73). But we should also note the Positivists' support for Jewish emancipation, e.g., by Congreve (*Essays*, vol. II, p. 451), and the Society's 'Address to the English Jews' (1892), *Positivist Comments*, pp. 18–20. See Colin Holmes. 'J. A. Hobson and the Jews', in Holmes, ed., *Immigrants and Minorities in British Society* (1978), pp. 125–57.

[32] *Social-Democrat* (Feb. 1899), 25; Hobson. *Democracy after the War*, pp. 84–5; Hobson. 'Nationalism, Economic and Political', *SPMR* (June 1939), 3–4.

The second main aspect of *Imperialism*, generally much more neglected, was Hobson's proposed solution to the problem of empire, which was partly domestic and partly international. Domestically, Hobson's analysis rested on the premise that the original oversaving and underspending resulted from social inequality in Britain itself. An 'advanced' radical or socialist 'productivist' assumption was thus the starting-point: the only legitimate profit was one earned from actual labour, not from speculation: 'The over-saving which is the economic root of Imperialism is found by analysis to consist of rents, monopoly profits, and other unearned or excessive elements of income, which, not being earned by labour of head or hand, have no legitimate *raison d'être*.' Hobson's solution was that under 'a sound econ-omy the pressure would be reversed: the growing wants of progressive societies would be a constant stimulus to the inventive and operative energies of producers, and would form a constant strain upon the powers of production'. Lying behind the critique of capitalism, then, was a clear 'little England' ideal in which priority would be given to the home market through a more equitable distribution of wealth. The remedy, 'social reform', meant raising 'the wholesome standard of private and public consumption for a nation, so as to enable the nation to live up to its highest standard of production'. Hobson thus favoured a 'brilliant revival of British agriculture', asserting that

There is no natural necessity for a civilized nation to expand the area of its territory, in order either to increase its production of food and other forms of material wealth, or to find markets for its increased products ... The true greatness of nations has been educated by the concentrated skill in the detailed development of limited national resources which the contracted area of the State has developed in them.[33]

But this was not only in order to guarantee an adequate food supply. It was also to ensure some balancing of the oppressive process of urbanisation. Writing in 1908, Hobson warned of 'the damage to vitality, stability of character, home life, and sanity of interests involved in crowding our people into large industrial cities with no fixity of work or home, and no close contact with the resources and the beauty of their native land'.[34]

Such assertions provide ammunition for the view that Hobson's was indeed a 'Little Englander' outlook during this period, echoing some (but not other) aspects of Cobdenite non-interventionism, and possibly reflect-ing a 'pro-Boer' outlook. Two relatively recent accounts imply this is the

[33] Hobson. *Imperialism*, p. 233.
[34] Hobson. 'Introduction' to Montague Fordham. *Mother Earth* (1908), p. v.

best label to be applied. The first suggests that to 'Hobson and Hobhouse, the most advanced and comprehensive of the Little Englanders, England was a civil society moving towards an organic unity or harmony through natural self-direction'. The second contends that 'Hobson produced the most eloquent and clear exposition of his Little Englander outlook in his writings dealing with the Boer War.'[35] And there is some further contemporary evidence continuing to link Hobson with Cobden, with Joseph Burgess writing in 1915 that while Hobson had discarded Cobdenism in domestic concerns, he still swore 'by Cobdenism in international finance', for instance by promoting overseas investment.[36] The assertion that a strong Cobdenite influence remains here has also been made elsewhere.[37] Hobson's most immediate solution to imperialism, too, the repudiation of governmental protection for overseas investments, clearly echoed his own definition in 1902 of Cobdenism as 'a purely defensive attitude regarding the existing empire, and total abstinence from acquisitions of new territory'.[38]

The residual problem exposed in the 'Ethics of Empire' article, however, was that some form of imperialism could be justified provided exploitation was governed and moderated by an as yet undefined international body. How could such a body be described? What legitimacy or sovereignty could it possess, and why should these be respected by selfish nation-states? And how could such a proposal possibly be commensurate with a 'Little Englander' outlook? Hobson was firmly of the view that his 'higher', 'sane' or 'legitimate' imperialism demanded a new form of international order, and that the more jingoistic forms of nationalism – but not nationalism as such – stood in the way of creating such a body. When Hobson turned in *Imperialism* to consider alternatives to capitalist imperialism, his immediate target was the British Idealists' defence of nationalism, and specifically Bernard Bosanquet's *The Philosophical Theory of the State* (1899). This Hobson took to be arguing that the 'nation-state is the widest organization which has the common experience necessary to found a common life. [Bosanquet] carries the finality of the national type of society so far as virtually to repudiate the ethical fact and the utility of the conception of humanity.' If this were true, Hobson acknowledged, not only would 'ethical and political internationalism' be extremely difficult,

[35] Grainger. *Patriotisms*, p. 156; E. Green and M. Taylor. 'Further Thoughts on Little Englandism', in Samuel, ed., *Patriotism*, vol. I, p. 106.

[36] Joseph Burgess. *Homeland or Empire?* (Bradford, 1915), p. 4.

[37] E.g., Read. *Cobden and Bright*, p. 245.   [38] Hobson. *Imperialism*, pp. 359, 64.

but the idea of empire as an extension of national identity would in fact be reinforced, since empires could pretend to represent an expanded version of the nation-state and hence the only viable form of internationalism. And this in jingoistic form was exactly what they were then doing. Bosanquet had contended that

the object of our ethical idea of humanity is not really mankind as a single community. Putting aside the impossibilities arising from succession in time, we see that no such identical experience can be presupposed in all mankind as is necessary to effective membership of a common society and exercise of a general will.[39]

Hobson's conclusion about this passage was that

the real upshot of this line of thought is to emphasise the ethical self-sufficiency of a nation and to deny the validity of any practical standard of the conduct of nations towards one another, at any rate so far as the relations between higher and lower, or eastern and western, nations are concerned.

Instead, argued Hobson, 'we must set up, as a supreme standard of moral appeal, some conception of the welfare of humanity regarded as an organic unity', which could be applied whenever 'imperial interference with a "lower race"' occurred, by 'showing that it is acting for the real good of the subject race'.[40]

The problem as Hobson understood it was thus how to identify and define this conception of the 'welfare of humanity regarded as an organic unity'. The problematic, of course, is more than faintly Comtean; the 'theory of human unity' had been defended at length in chapter one of the second volume of Comte's *System of Positive Polity*, and Comte's British followers as we have seen also described this ideal in 'organic' terms by the 1870s.[41] Hobson adopted a two-pronged approach to the issue. Firstly he asserted that the assumption of the 'finality of nationalism' was in fact being superseded by actual existing practices, namely

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[39] Bernard Bosanquet. *The Philosophical Theory of the State* (1899), p. 329. Bosanquet responded to some of these issues in *Social and International Ideals* (1917), esp. pp. 270–302, 'The Function of the State in Promoting the Unity of Mankind'. See the discussion in Sandra M. den Otter. *British Idealism and Social Explanation* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 125–8.

[40] Hobson. *Imperialism*, pp. 166, 233, 235. Here Hobson thus agreed with his notional opponents; as Bosanquet put it, 'City-state, Nation-State, Commonwealth, Federation, World-state, it makes no difference. Behind all force there must be a general will, and the general will must represent a communal mind' (*Social and International Ideals*, p. 271). Bosanquet thus insisted that 'Leagues, alliances, united states, which have not the spirit of true communities, carry the germs of disruption within them' (p. 293). The notion that an enlightenment ideal based upon science could provide the basis for such unity, as typified by Positivism, he specifically denied (p. 300).

[41] Comte. *System*, vol. II, pp. 20–69.

treaty relations, international credit and exchange, a common postal, and within narrower limits, a common railway system … the actual machinery of conventions and conferences for concerted international action, and the whole unwritten law of war and international courtesies, embassies, consulates, and the like – all these things rest upon a basis of recognition of certain reciprocal duties, the neglect or violation of which would be punished by forfeiture of most favoured nations' treatment in the future, and by the reprobation and the possibly combined intervention of other States. We have here at least a real beginning of effective international federation, with the rudiments of legal sanction for the establishment and enforcement of rights.

Such factors, then, were for Hobson producing 'the common experience necessary to found a common life … a degree of true "like-mindedness," which forms the psychical basis of some rudimentary internationalism in the field of politics'.[42]

   The second part of his strategy was to extend the logic of this growing assimilation to posit an international order which could supersede imperialism and manage exploitation itself in a very different way – something not far off from Comte's 'Western Republic', and perhaps less distant from Fabian socialist imperialism than some earlier commentators have suggested.[43] Such a scheme could then form the

third alternative to the policy of national independence on the one hand, and of the right of conquest by which the more efficient nation absorbs the less efficient nation on the other, the alternative of experimental and progressive federation, which, proceeding on the line of greatest common experience, shall weave formal bonds of political attachment between the most 'like-minded' nations, extending them to others as common experience grows wider, until an effective political federation is established, comprising the whole of 'the civilized world', i.e. all those nations which have attained a considerable fund of that 'common experience' comprised under the head of civilization.[44]

Hobson believed, then, that empirically a 'soul' for internationalism had been provided by these forces. This was not a novel argument, and Malcolm Quin described something similar at about the same time.[45] And the

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[42] Hobson. *Imperialism*, p. 167.
[43] Nemmers, for instance, suggests that Hobson's definition of imperialism 'excludes "socialistic" imperialism' (*Hobson*, p. 34). On the importance of exploitation to a definition of economic imperialism see Trevor Lloyd. 'Africa and Hobson's Imperialism', *P&P*, 55 (1972), 130–53.
[44] Hobson. *Imperialism*, p. 168.
[45] 'The development of industry, the course of the world's commerce, the steamship, the railway, the electric telegraph, the movements of the emigrant, the enterprises of the traveller and the missionary, the constant diffusion of ideas, the increasing intercourse of people with people – these are all influences which are rapidly enlarging the comity of nations, and bringing every individual country into presence of a vast range of interests and responsibilities from which it is impossible for it to dissociate its own. It must recognise that it is a member of a universal commonwealth, in comparison with which the greatest Empire in existence becomes insignificant' (Quin. *Empire and Humanity*, p. 3).

rationale for international government could also be understood as promoting nationalism:

An international government alone can furnish adequate protection to weak but valuable nationalities, and can check the insolent brutality of powerful aggressors, preserving that equality of opportunities for national self-expression which is as essential to the commonwealth of nations as to the welfare of the several nations.[46]

However, having denied the model based upon the right of conquest, Hobson then defended certain leading characteristics of the existing imperialist system. This aspect of his proposals has been played down, if not simply ignored, by many who assume his anti-imperialist qualifications to be beyond dispute.[47] Having insisted that his form of international government would protect weaker nationalities, Hobson denied that the 'Lower Races' possessed unlimited autonomy, since

There can no more be absolute nationalism in the society of nations than absolute individualism in the single nation. Some measure of practical internationality, implying a 'comity of nations,' and some relations of 'right' and 'duty' between nations, are almost universally admitted.[48]

The crucial question here was thus one of defining what these boundaries of 'right' and 'duty' were, and then of establishing how they could be enforced. We saw at the beginning of this book that one of the longest-lived justifications for imperialism, dating back at least as far as the Spanish conquest of the Americas, but amplified by Vattel in the eighteenth century, was the natural law argument that the earth had been created to benefit all humanity, and that those best able to develop its resources could act accordingly on behalf of the common interest. Hobson now floated this idea in terms of a modified version of an argument from necessity:

Suppose a famine or flood or other catastrophe deprives a population of the means of living on their land, while unutilized land lies in plenty beyond their borders in another country, are the rulers of the latter entitled to refuse an entrance or a necessary settlement? As in the case of individuals, so of nations, it will be generally allowed that necessity knows no laws, which, rightly interpreted, means that the right of self-preservation transcends all other rights as the prime condition of their emergence and exercise.

[46] Hobson. *Imperialism*, p. 193.
[47] But there are exceptions, e.g., John Cunningham Wood. 'J. A. Hobson and British Imperialism', *AJES*, 42 (1983), 490.
[48] Hobson. *Imperialism*, p. 225 (first printed in Hobson. 'Imperialism and the Lower Races', *British Friend,* 1902, 53–5, 81–3, 129–32).

It is a moot point, however, in a world not yet dependent upon imported petroleum, or even rubber, as to whether the 'self-preservation' argument applied in this context. To what degree at this time were tropical products essential to avoiding 'catastrophe' for the more developed world, as opposed to merely enhancing the pace of economic growth and technological innovation, or affording luxuries? But there was a more immediately pressing issue. Hobson continued,

To step in and utilize natural resources which are left undeveloped is one thing, to compel the inhabitants to develop them is another. The former is easily justified, involving the application on a wider scale of a principle whose equity, as well as expediency, is recognized and enforced in most civilized nations. The other interference whereby men who prefer to live on a low standard of life with little labour shall be forced to harder or more continuous labour, is far more difficult of justification.

None the less, Hobson now introduced a paternalist, civilisational analogy, contending that

there can be no inherent natural right in a people to refuse that measure of compulsory education which shall raise it from childhood to manhood in the order of nationalities. The analogy furnished by the education of a child is *prima facie* a sound one, and is not invalidated by the dangerous abuses to which it is exposed in practice.[49]

The problem, of course, was that this was precisely the argument which had underpinned, as a moral justification, so much existing capitalist imperialism.[50] What had happened, then, to the supposed 'cultural relativism' of the 'Ethics of Empire' article of 1897? The 'ethical defence of empire' described there now appears to have been modified in favour of a much more unbending paternalism. Hobson had insisted in February 1899 that 'all further expansion of this empire is unnecessary, inexpedient, and an abrogation, not an extension, of our work as a civilising agency in the world'. But he now underscored the general validity of the 'civilising agency' of empire. The question was how to balance a legitimate right to develop resources with the risk that in so doing indigenous inhabitants would find themselves 'civilised' out of existence – the bleakest of Social Darwinist options, which Hobson was anxious to combat. The answer Hobson proposed was to juxtapose exploitation by 'organized Governments of civilized Powers' to

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[49] Hobson. *Imperialism*, pp. 226–30.
[50] Hence Porter's suggestion that 'it can be argued that imperialism is no less imperialistic for being under international control, especially if the rules the latter is enforcing can be regarded as essentially "western" ones' (*The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, p. 214).

that of 'a horde of private adventurers, slavers, piratical traders, treasure hunters, concession mongers, who, animated by mere greed of gold or power, would set about the work of exploitation under no public control and with no regard to the future'. Interference by the former with 'lower races' was thus 'not *prima facie* illegitimate'. But if 'such interference cannot safely be left to private enterprise of individual whites', it followed 'that civilized Governments *may* undertake the political and economic control of lower races – in a word, that the characteristic form of modern Imperialism is not under all conditions illegitimate'.[51] Indeed he stressed privately in 1902 that it was

not necessary to show a separate gain to the 'lower' races taken under the trust of the civilized world. It is the same question as that of individual rights: there are no natural inherent rights of individual or nation: the good of 'the whole' must of course be the standard. But as in the politics of the state it is an important maxim of practical government that the individual shall be regarded as a valuable end in himself, so with the nationality.[52]

This assertion clearly, then, proposed a defence of one, or possibly several, variants on imperialist practice: much hinges on what Hobson meant by 'control' of the 'lower races'. We saw in the last chapter that proposals for a socialist or collectivist administration of empire had in fact circulated for some time before Hobson reached these conclusions; indeed in one form or another, for some twenty years, not counting the Positivists' contributions. What distinguished these from 'normal' imperialism was that they contemplated removing control of the exploitative process from the exclusive hands of private capitalists, and that they gave much greater stress to avoiding subjecting native peoples to damaging encounters with Europeans. Hobson now restated these premises. The key issue was how to treat the 'expansion of this plea of material necessity that constitutes the first claim to a control of the tropics by "civilised" nations'. Respecting the 'genuine and confident conviction about "social efficiency"' which 'must be taken as the chief moral support of Imperialism', Hobson offered three conditions:

Such interference with the government of a lower race must be directed primarily to secure the safety and progress of the civilization of the world, and not the special interest of the interfering nation. Such interference must be attended by an improvement and elevation of the character of the people who are brought under this control. Lastly, the determination of the two preceding conditions must not be

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[51] *NA* (2 Feb. 1899), 26; Hobson. *Imperialism*, pp. 230–1.   [52] Murray Papers, 8, f. 209.

left to the arbitrary will or judgment of the interfering nation, but must proceed from some organized representation of civilized humanity.[53]

Only the third of these premises, we may note, really presented Hobson and his readers with a serious problem. The first two had been essentially covered by liberal defenders of empire, such as J. S. Mill, who had argued that even 'despotic' British rule in India was justified so long as the improvement of life could be demonstrated.[54] But here we also see what a distance exists between Hobson and some of the more militantly anti-imperialist Positivists, like Malcolm Quin, who, we recall, accepted no right of interference in other nations' affairs. If we are seeking to plot a spectrum of anti-imperialism, then, Quin's ultra-nationalism is more clearly anti-interventionist than Hobson's position.

What are the sources of Hobson's view here? He appeared to side with some amongst the more extreme of his potential leading opponents. The Social Darwinist Karl Pearson had written, as Hobson quoted, of 'our right to work the unutilised resources of the earth, be they in Africa or Asia'.[55] Even more importantly, Hobson had evidently been re-reading Benjamin Kidd's *The Control of the Tropics* (1898), perhaps on Clarke's advice, for the latter had become friendly with Kidd.[56] This described the 'great rivalry of the future ... for the inheritance of the tropics, not indeed for possession in the ordinary sense of the word ... but for the control of these regions according to certain standards'. Existing colonial models, notably the plantation system, were unsuitable to the task, however. Kidd emphasised that there would not be 'within any time with which we are practically concerned, such a thing as good government, in the European sense, of the tropics by the natives of these regions'. This meant that the 'tropics will not, therefore, be developed by the natives themselves'. (A right to do so Kidd loosely acknowledged could only be based upon 'the intention and the ability to develop these regions'.) Thus, insisted Kidd, the 'tropics in such circumstances can only be governed as a trust for civilization, and with a full sense of the responsibility which such a trust involves'. This involved promoting 'higher ideals of humanity, a higher type of social order' along the lines of the Indian Civil Service. It invoked 'a duty which allows the occupying country to surround her own position therein with no laws or tariffs operating in her own interests, and which allows her to retain to

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[53] Hobson. *Imperialism*, pp. 232, 238, 155.   [54] J. S. Mill. *On Liberty*, p. 23.
[55] Hobson. 'The Scientific Basis of Imperialism', 463; Hobson. *Imperialism*, p. 157, quoting Karl Pearson. *National Life from the Standpoint of Science* (2nd edn, Cambridge, 1905, p. 48).
[56] See D. P. Crook. *Benjamin Kidd* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 104–6.

herself no exclusive advantage in the markets which she has assisted in creating'.[57] Free trade, in other words, rather than protective tariffs, was to predominate. Though acknowledgement has been made of Hobson's antagonism to Kidd's Social Darwinism,[58] Kidd's formulation of an enlightened mode of imperialism was evidently close to the model Hobson adopted in *Imperialism*, even so far as following Kidd's emphasis on the supremacy of claims of 'social efficiency' to justify imperial control.[59]

Yet if Hobson accepted the thrust of Pearson's and Kidd's assertion that a right to exploit tropical resources could rest ultimately only upon a much tighter set of controls over the actual process of exploitation, he did not propose very precisely how this was to be accomplished. The argument favouring interference he would, however, support to the end of his life. In 1908 he presented a paper to the Rainbow Circle on 'National versus Individual Standards of Morality' which again took up the view that 'each nation's narrow self-interest' was 'its supreme law'. Hobson acknowledged that the 'invasion of a weaker nation by a stronger is unjustifiable among states on the same level of civilisation, but may be justifiable where the weaker state is a backward or barbarous state wh[ich] might benefit by the civilisation forced upon it & whose development might be for the good of the world at large'. The problematic remained, as in *Imperialism*, that 'the moral defect of imperialism is due to lack of any true sanction, from a society of nations, to the interference of an imperialist nation with the life of a lower people'. In the same year, too, he emphasised that

No nation can live to itself. This thought justifies interference with an institution like slavery; the demand also that the Russian Government should put itself in order; and also that Imperial control of the relations between our colonies and the native races. A nation has the right to interfere when it has been delegated by a Society of Nations to put a stop to some monstrous custom. This is different from saying: We are a superior nation, and must send armies and administer in the name of humanity. It embodies the remoralising policy that is characteristic of our day. We look forward to the same moral relations now prevalent between nations as are now between individuals. That will be established by the growth of custom and will result in the setting up of a federation of nations with civilising power.[60]

Hobson reiterated in 1909 that he had 'strong sympathy' with the doctrine of the 'sacred rights of nationality' by which no nation had a

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[57] Kidd. *The Control of the Tropics*, pp. 3, 48, 51–2, 53, 55–6.   [58] E.g., Cain. *Hobson*, p. 59.
[59] Kidd. *The Control of the Tropics*, p. 98. H. G. Wells similarly paid lip-service to an ideal of African exploitation under 'some supreme international control, a control in which each nation interested can exercise a share corresponding to its original possessions' (*A Reasonable Man's Peace*, 1917, p. 3).
[60] Freeden. *Rainbow Circle*, p. 178; Hobson. 'Political Ethics of Socialism', *SPM*, 13 (1909), 55.

right to 'force its assistance on another'. But he again stressed that if some form of international society existed representing all peoples, which 'delegated England or France in the interests of civilisation to take under her tutelage some backward or degraded people which lay on their borders, maintaining order, developing the natural resources of the country, and helping to teach the arts of civilisation', this would 'afford some moral basis for Imperialism'. Such a body, he stressed, would be governed by three considerations:

(1) a recognition that it belongs to the common good of nations to leave each nation liberty to govern itself in all matters where such liberty does not directly and clearly contravene the common good; (2) a repudiation of the practices of parasitic Imperialism, or forcible interference with the life of another nation so as to secure a gain in excess of net services rendered; (3) the positive practice of mutual aid between nations upon equal terms, extending to the conduct of nations the sound organic principle of moral conduct 'from each according to its powers, to each according to its needs.' In such manner, as the individual realises himself in a democratic nation, so the nation best realises itself in a democratic society of nations.[61]

We note here that Hobson again did not exclude the *forcible* development of another nation's resources as such. He only hedged the prospect in by emphasising that its results should not be 'parasitic'. But if forcible development were itself 'imperialist', Hobson's position, too, would have to count as such in a much stronger and potentially more menacing way than is evident in *Imperialism*. And indeed, we can detect a hardening of this view in his 1911 discussion of a range of similar issues, which seems to betray a more virulent strain of racialist Social Darwinism than that usually associated with him. Hobson now pointedly contended that

It is impossible to treat the main body of the African people as being upon a level of modern industrial civilisation or as capable of attaining to any such level. If these people are not capable of responding to economic motives and are unable to acquire the manual and mental skill and the power of organisation which are essentials of successful industry, either we must, under the name of the sanctity of nationalism, allow these people complete control over their own resources to use them to the best advantage or to waste them, or to insist on some white control which will force them to produce for the world the supply it needs.

The recognition of the 'extreme form of nationalism', then, would have meant that a 'few hundred thousands of Red Indians in North America ought to have been left in possession' there, an outcome Hobson clearly

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[61] Hobson. *The Crisis of Liberalism* (1909), pp. 257–9. See the *Socialist Review* (Nov. 1909), 204–15, for the original formulation of the argument.

found preposterous. Hobson's use of the term 'force' here, then, has to be underscored: it is precisely this element of compulsion which requires us to classify his own scheme of exploitation as 'imperialist', more even than the claim of utility which underpinned it. We have reached the limits of tolerating nationalism as such: Vattel, clad as higher utility, was again triumphant. The same year Hobson would reiterate

These peoples have no natural or inalienable right to withhold the natural resources of their country from the outside world, and they cannot develop them without the assistance of that outside world. There is, therefore, no other solution than the education among civilised States of a higher sense of justice, humanity, and economic wisdom in the rendering of that assistance.[62]

In 1929 he would repeat that 'a reasonable effective internationalism' must emphasise that

the welfare of mankind requires you to grant reasonable access to the lands and other natural resources within your area of government which you are not willing or not able to cultivate or develop: you have no natural or equitable right to refuse to would-be immigrants entry into your vacant lands, or to place unfair and oppressive terms upon your trade relations with the outside world.[63]

It is certainly the case, however, that Hobson continued to promote the protection of fragile nationalities thereafter. In *A League of Nations* (1915) he wrote that if 'a larger conception of internationalism' were to prevail, the real danger was 'the tendency of the Great Powers to arrogate to themselves an undue proportion of authority in the determinant acts of international government'. During the First World War Hobson offered his most extensive commentary on the issue of a federative world political structure. In *Towards International Government* (1915), he urged pressure towards 'effective autonomy' in future international policy rather than to 'the complete break-up of composite empires or kingdoms in order to erect new independent States upon a basis of nationalist sentiment'. Cobden, he insisted, had not been 'mistaken in regarding Free Trade as a great peacemaker. But he could not foresee two counteracting influences due to mal-distribution of economic and political power among the respective classes in the industrial nations.'[64] In 1917 he again reinforced his commitment to

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[62] Hobson. 'The Contact of Higher and Lower Races', *SPML* (May 1911), 4–7; Hobson. 'Opening of Markets and Countries', in G. Spiller, ed., *Papers on Inter-Racial Problems* (1911), p. 231.
[63] Hobson. 'The Saving Face of Internationalism', *CR*, 135 (June 1929), 693.
[64] Hobson. *A League of Nations* (1915), pp. 6, 19; Hobson. *Towards International Government* (1915), pp. 126, 137. Critics insisted that 'what Mr Hobson really desires is a World-Government' (Alfred E. Zimmern. *Nationality & Government*, 1918, p. 39).

internationalism compared with the 'close nationalism' of the imperialist or protectionist type. In his brief utopia published in 1918, too, Hobson envisioned that financiers continued the war, whose object was not in fact crushing German militarism but 'completing British bondage'. After the war he protested at 'distorting the League of Nations into a Holy Alliance of the Entente Powers, and of safeguarding the absolute sovereignty of their State against any assertions of an international commonwealth'.[65] Rejecting 'the disposal of the mandated areas as war-spoils by the victors', he complained that the 'perversion of this great ideal of a League of Nations into a present instrument for autocratic and imperialistic government will rank in history as a treason to humanity as deplorable as the Peace Treaty with which it was so injuriously bound'.[66] In 1926 he emphasised that

If the League contained the substance of a government for the Society of Nations, some such mandatory principle might be applied most serviceably to safeguard the world against obvious abuses of the doctrine of absolute national self-determination. For no nation can rightly claim to refuse to other nations fair access to its natural resources and its markets, or to block some natural convenience of transport … But some coercive provisions might be required in order to bring backward countries into conformity with such requirements of world-welfare.

'Coercive' provisions, then, were still acceptable. But Hobson also stressed that 'experience has already shown how incompetent the League is to enforce even the most elementary safeguards against the abuse of Mandatory Powers, and how impotent is the permanent Commission to secure full and reliable information in the annual reports from the Mandatories'. And as late as 1929 he still insisted that 'the historic function of the absolute independent State has been fulfilled, and that modern needs, material and moral, demand a wider conception of community, expressed by expanding areas of international co-operation and co-ordinated by a supreme international government'. Thus

the needs and interests of humanity at large, the people of the world, must over-ride the purely national will, where the latter is obstructive to the former. Justice and reason, however, make the proviso that when the obstructive national will is over-ruled, it shall be by an outside power which can reasonably be taken as representative of the interests of humanity, not of the interests of some section of a particular outside nation.[67]

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[65] Hobson. *The Fight for Democracy* (*c.*1917), pp. 42–58; Lucian (pseud. J. A. Hobson). *1920. Dips into the Near Future* (1918), p. 72; Hobson. *The New Holy Alliance* (1919), p. 4.
[66] Hobson. *Problems of a New World*, pp. 232–3.
[67] Hobson. *Free Thought in the Social Sciences* (1926), pp. 196–8; Hobson. 'The Saving Face of Internationalism', 691; Hobson. *Wealth and Life* (1929), p. 392.

HOBSON AS SOCIALIST IMPERIALIST

We are now in a position to attempt to classify Hobson's 'alternative' scheme vis-à-vis the panoply of 'socialist commonwealth' ideals explored in the last chapter, as well as Positivist recipes for a post-imperial world. The label of 'socialist imperialism' is, as we have seen, not to be identified exclusively with Fabianism, but can also be construed in terms of a 'socialist commonwealth' ideal which met, as we saw, with a fairly widespread acceptance. What case is there for applying some variation on these conceptions to Hobson? The grounds are essentially two: firstly, the imperialist component, namely the justification of continuing exploitation of tropical resources by European nations, particularly by 'coercive' means; and secondly, the socialist, that this exploitation was proposed to be undertaken in a 'socialist' manner.

The first of these premises, as we have seen, has already been substantiated without difficulty, if not without paradox. Hobson's is not strictly speaking an *anti*-imperialist account as such, in the sense of rejecting all pretexts for occupying the lands of others in order to utilise their raw materials, and relying instead on purely *voluntary* trade.[68] Hobson accepted a crucial element in the mainstream Fabians' (and Kidd's) *justification* for empire, namely that the world's resources, the common inheritance of mankind, could rightfully be developed by more efficient nations, whether the less efficient consented or not. But he rejected the cosmopolitan internationalist *method* proposed for such exploitation as too hostile to the better types of nationalism, doubtless regarding it as yet another aspect of the 'anti-democratic Socialism' of the Fabians. For Hobson, imagining 'that the cause of an ideal internationalism can be promoted by breaking down the forms of nationalism and seeking to destroy its spirit in those little peoples where alone it truly thrives' was 'wholly to misunderstand the social problem. Internationalism is not the negation but the expansion of the national spirit.'[69] Hobson's views were here clearly commensurate with those of his close friend (since the early 1890s) 'the Fabian Essayist', William Clarke, who was editor of the *Progressive Review*, and whose

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[68] E.g., Jules Townshend. *J. A. Hobson* (Manchester, 1990), p. 102. Long notes that the 'application of a civilisation test, especially tied to the contribution to the advance of internationalism, would be biased in favour of the Western nations. Hobson's self-consciously utilitarian proposals would have trampled the rights of minorities and would effectively have set up a "tyranny of the majority"' (*Towards a New Liberal Internationalism*, pp. 170–1).

[69] Hobson. 'The New Aristocracy of Mr Wells', *CR*, 89 (1906), 488; Hobson. 'Socialistic Imperialism', 55–6.

works Hobson posthumously reprinted with the socialist William Burrows.[70] Clarke as we have seen was an unabashed Positivist who lamented at length that Comte's wish to subordinate politics to ethics was 'scarcely evident at the present moment'. His own anti-imperialist writings stretched back to the mid-1880s, and were doubtless key sources for Hobson's move in this direction.[71] He was vehemently, emotionally anti-imperialist, writing to Benjamin Kidd in late 1895 respecting Africa that 'capitalists here … grab at regions in other parts of the world, enrich themselves & reduce the natives to virtual slavery. This is what is going on in Africa, & I will fight it as long as I live. Unlike you I do not desire to see the English race everywhere, I do not like the creature well enough.' He adopted the standard Positivist party line respecting nationalism, namely that a balanced and unchauvinistic patriotism was a natural focal point for human affection and identity. Writing in 1897, he agreed fully 'with those who contend that a nation is a useful intermediate stage between the family and humanity, and that national ideas must be respected – which is what the Jingo does not hold when it happens to be the ideas of another country'. As the century ended his anti-imperialism hardened. By 1899 he confessed to Sidney Webb that 'I detest bureaucratic imperialism so much that I can scarcely trust myself to speak upon it,' and in another letter described British actions in the Transvaal as 'infamous'. In an undiluted expression of Positivist diplomacy, Clarke emphasised that

The superficial reader might possibly imagine that we were desirous of seeing national distinctions abolished, and the whole world reduced to one dull uniformity. So far from this being our own view, we can show that this is, by a singular paradox, just the real ideal of the Jingo, the man who carries nationalism to exaggerated forms. When any person has surrendered what should be a passion for humanity as a whole, and a desire to promote its good as a whole, and has deliberately set himself to working for his nation as against other nations, he inevitably desires to see its sway worldwide and its average ideals accepted everywhere.[72]

When the Fabians began to embrace their own brand of empire, then, Hobson and Clarke found themselves on the same side respecting the

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[70] *EW* (30 June 1900), 402. Clarke is identified as a 'Fabian' in Hobson. *Confessions of an Economic Heretic*, p. 36. Hobson acknowledged Clarke's assistance as early as *Problems of Poverty* (1891, p. vi). Clarke in turn viewed himself and Hobson as the *Progressive Review*'s leading anti-imperialists as early as 1896; see Porter. *Critics*, p. 165.

[71] Notably, 'An English Imperialist Bubble' (1886), reprinted in Clarke. *Writings*, pp. 76–89, and 'The Genesis of Jingoism' (1897), *ibid*., pp. 108–17.

[72] Kidd Papers, C112; Passfield Papers, 2/4/9, f. 286; Manchester Guardian Archive, 122/79; Clarke. *Writings*, pp. 116–17.

incompatibility of imperialism and democracy.[73] Rejecting the 'claptrap' of Sidney Webb and Bernard Shaw, Clarke declared to Kidd in early 1898 that

It is precisely my objection to imperialism which my moral sense revolted at many years ago that has led me to give up Fabianism, which, like you, is imperialist as being in accord with State Socialism. The bigger & more expanded the empire the more you will & must have militarism, of regulation, of machinery, of government by experts with all its heartless mechanism, & the less you will have of liberty, of economy, of serious thoughts about internal reform, the less of morality & of substantial self-government. The history of the world is clear about this as it is not clear about anything else.

Hobson adopted exactly the same position as Clarke respecting the relationship between patriotism and internationalism. As late as 1915 he would continue to stress 'the growing acceptance of the conception of nationality as a just and expedient basis of government'.[74] In 1939 he wrote of the need for 'the displacement of national by human sentiment, involving a willingness to sacrifice the interest of one's own nation for the general good of humanity ... the spirit needed to make the mind of modern man conform to the moral and economic fabric of the world in which we live', while condemning 'the nationalism which feeds on the sentiment of sovereignty' as 'the enemy of world order and progress'.[75] That year, lecturing on 'The Ethics of Humanity', he insisted that

the smaller groupings of humanity in the family, the neighbourhood, the city, exercise an emotional pressure upon the individual personality so that each member of such society sees not only his own identity of interest in the group good, but feels favourably disposed to the benefit of each fellow member.

Internationalism, he insisted, only became 'a real factor in civilisation, a real security for peace and progress, when nationhood is freed from nationalism and is supported by that commonsense within a nation which signifies democracy in its governmental aspect'.[76] Again, then, we must acknowledge a key Positivist component in Hobson's theory of both nationalism and internationalism.

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[73] Peter Clarke. *Liberals and Social Democrats* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 61; Freeden, ed. *Rainbow Circle*, pp. 71–2.

[74] Kidd Papers, C113; Hobson. 'The Political Bases of a World-State', in F. S. Marvin, ed., *The Unity of Western Civilisation* (Oxford, 1915), pp. 260–79, here p. 260.

[75] Hobson. 'The Ethics of Humanity', *SPMR* (Aug. 1939), 4; Hobson. 'Nationalism, Economic and Political'.

[76] Hobson. 'The Ethics of Humanity', 3.

Hobson's conclusion against the Fabians in 1901, then, was that the 'presumption must always hold that a nation in being is better adapted to its territorial environment than any other nation seeking to subjugate it, and should be left free to utilize its land and to grow its own political institutions'.[77] Yet if Hobson in his anxiety to reject the Fabian strategy of 'absorbing nations' invoked a traditional radical appeal to the right of national self-determination, we have seen that in *Imperialism*, published shortly afterwards, he in fact backed sharply away from the ideal of leaving countries 'free to utilize' their land, and instead reverted to Kidd's position. Hobson thus did not reject 'socialist imperialism', and even modified his position in such a way as to bring him closer to Kidd as well as the Fabians, though this risked violating his sensibilities respecting nationality. It can therefore be suggested – what has not so far been urged by Hobson scholars – that Hobson's scheme for exploiting tropical resources (which was not, incidentally, intended to apply to India – for which he recommended 'full self-government under the British flag' – or China)[78] should be more properly classed in terms of a 'socialist-imperialist' agenda in the sense in which the Fabians in particular had developed the ideal, despite their clear differences on the issue of nationalism, rather than the 'Little Englander' label which is still sometimes assigned to him.[79] Hence a juxtaposition of Fabian imperialism to the Hobsonian view that imperialism was intrinsically exploitative, as for instance Porter has suggested, can no longer hold.[80] In both cases we have the justification of exploitation on the basis of a higher form of utility, coupled with a paternalist account of global interference rooted in a civilisational ideal. On this issue Vattel had trumped nationalism and Positivist diplomacy alike.

This proposal also sits uneasily, accordingly, beside the suggestion that Hobson should be seen as embracing a Cobdenite perspective in this period.[81] Cain terms both Hobson's 'justification for imperialism' and Macdonald's approach to socialist imperialism 'organic', assuming in the first instance in Hobson's case that Ruskin is a key source, as well as Hobson's 'Idealist commitment to the common good'.[82] (But 'Idealist', as capitalised, is possibly ill-applied here, given Hobson's specific opposition

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[77] Hobson. 'Socialistic Imperialism', 56.   [78] *MG* (28 Jan. 1910), 5; Hobson. *Imperialism*, pp. 303–4.

[79] Hence Macdonald's adoption of it in *Labour and the Empire* seems consistent. For the 'Little Englander' interpretation see Green and Taylor. 'Further Thoughts on Little Englandism', pp. 103–10.

[80] Porter. 'Fabians, Imperialists and the International Order'. But Porter earlier emphasised also that the distance between Hobson and the Fabians was more one of 'emphasis than of opinion' vis-à-vis the utility of accepting the empire as an engine of improvement (*Critics*, p. 117).

[81] See Cain. 'Hobson, Cobdenism and ... Imperialism', 565.   [82] Cain. *Hobson*, pp. 153–4.

to two of the leading Idealist writers, Ritchie and Bosanquet.[83]) Since free trade would prevail once non-Western markets had matured, Cobdenism was still relevant. Thus Cain concludes that *Imperialism* 'is best seen as a sustained attempt to bring up to date a long radical tradition of criticism of empire and imperialism', rather than as a marked departure from it.[84] To Peter Clarke, 'Clarke and Hobson were formally unattached to any party but, when their apparently Fabian surface was scratched, they turned out to be Gladstonian, or at least Cobdenite, underneath.' Porter, too, has suggested that 'Hobson's internationalism was similar to Cobden's in many ways. It saw the salvation of the world in the peaceful and profitable exchange of goods between men.' Cain argues moreover that the leading positions adopted in *Imperialism* were 'to be modified drastically thereafter', and certainly by 1911, with the aim of demonstrating Hobson's renewed embrace of the Cobdenite tradition as 'the antithesis of, and an alternative to, imperialism', and the ideal of free trade as a unifying factor promoting internationalism.[85]

Given Hobson's comments on the irrelevance of a Cobdenite perspective on the state, however, this seems to be a misleading form of categorisation: Hobson certainly believed that the state would play a major role in creating and maintaining international order, including economic affairs, and saw this as a key departure from Cobdenism. In 1906 he insisted that what 'Cobden and his friends failed to take account of was the continued power of certain classes within the nation, as distinguished from the national interests conceived as a whole – the power of certain people to misrepresent the people'. For the post-war period Hobson, writing in 1917, recommended for Africa

no mere policy of *laissez faire*. It involves a careful control over the operations of concessionaires and trading companies by their Governments, and the working out

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[83] See also Leonard Hobhouse's attack on 'Idealism' as the main source of modern reaction in *Democracy and Reaction* (1904). There are useful comments on this context in David Weinstein. 'Consequentialist Cosmopolitanism', in Bell, ed., *Victorian Visions*, pp. 267–90. G. D. H. Cole noted that T. H. Green had influenced the young Hobson at Oxford (*EJ*, 50, 1940, 351). Lee associates Hobson's views with Kant's ideal of treating each person as an autonomous end, but modified by 'a social interpretation' (Lee. 'Hobson', vol. II, p. 513).

[84] Cain. *Hobson*, p. 159. For a similar conclusion see Harvey Mitchell. 'Hobson Revisited', *JHI*, 26 (1965), 410.

[85] Clarke. *Liberals and Social Democrats*, p. 58; Bernard Porter. 'Hobson and Internationalism', in Michael Freeden, ed., *Reappraising J. A. Hobson* (1990), pp. 179–80; Cain. 'Hobson, Cobdenism, and . . . Imperialism', 565, 569; Cain. 'Hobson's Developing Theory of Imperialism', *EHR*, 34 (1981), 315–16. J. E. King has similarly argued that by 1911 Hobson had come to believe that foreign investment might not be entirely parasitic, but might stimulate export demand for British goods (*Economic Exiles*, 1988, p. 118).

of an agreed international arrangement which shall at once harmonise the true interests of the European States and secure the human rights and liberties of the African peoples.[86]

Then there are Hobson's comments on Cobden in his 1918 study, in which Hobson distanced himself from the 'non-intervention policy of Cobden and his school' considerably. The latter, he said, was 'not merely a policy of external relations. It was the application of the same principle which led them to oppose all or most extensions of governmental powers for the regulation of the internal relations of citizens.' This implied, he stressed, that it was 'still less reasonable … to expect that the governments of different countries could pursue any fruitful process of co-operation for the common benefit of the society of nations'. He quoted Cobden as saying that he was 'opposed to any armed intervention in the affairs of other countries. I am against any interference by the government of one country in the affairs of another nation, even if it be confined to moral suasion.' But Hobson responded unequivocally that

Modern internationalists are no longer mere non-interventionalists, for the same reason that modern Radicals are no longer philosophic individualists. Experience has forced upon them the truth that governments are not essentially and of necessity the enemies of personal or national liberty, but that upon certain conditions they may become its creators.

Cobden, he emphasised in 1918, did not think it reasonable 'that the governments of different countries could pursue any fruitful process of co-operation for the common benefit of the society of nations'.[87] But such economic development promoted from without, by an international government, is exactly what he sought almost constantly from 1900 onwards. Hobson thus clearly wished to deny the applicability of the Cobdenite model by the end of the First World War, and often stressed the limitations of Cobdenism. Hence he again noted in 1921 that Cobden had 'valiantly assailed the militarism, protectionism and imperialism of his day, and recognized their affinity of spirit and certain of their common business aims, but without any full perception of their economic taproot, or of the rapid domination over foreign policy which they were soon destined to attain'.[88]

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[86] Hobson. 'The Ethics of Internationalism', *IJE*, 17 (1906), 22; *LL* (7 June 1917), 6.
[87] Hobson. *Richard Cobden* (1918), pp. 391, 400, 399, 405.
[88] Hobson. *Problems of a New World*, p. 20. See also Hobson. 'A Self-Contained Empire', *Labour Magazine* (Nov. 1923), 297–9.

Then there is the socialist component of the 'socialist-imperialist' label. Recent scholarship, while noting that Hobson's proposals for international government were controversial, has only reluctantly linked his views to contemporary socialist debates. Cain acknowledges that 'vestiges of his old interest in imperial unity remained', in so far as Hobson argued that 'a voluntary federation of free British States, working peacefully for the common safety and prosperity, is in itself eminently desirable, and might indeed form a step towards a wider federation of civilised states in the future'. But he does not connect this to 'socialist imperialism', and as a description 'vestiges' perhaps understates a scheme as ambitious as Hobson's (but is commensurate with the 'Cobdenite' interpretation). Freeden refers to Cain's description as 'a hint of social imperialism in Hobson's writings', but we suggested in the last chapter that it is useful to distinguish between 'social' and 'socialist' imperialism in this context. Allett concludes that the Fabian position 'fell short of Hobson's mandate that the interference must directly benefit the subject peoples'. Townshend has noted Hobson's defence of a 'sane' imperialism, but without specifying how this was to be structured. Long has sceptically examined Hobson's views on the development of global resources in terms of an 'unalloyed global utilitarianism'. He furthermore conjectures that Hobson's scheme, since it left him advocating 'a form of international paternalism', 'throws the whole of Hobson's suggestions with regard to economic equity on the international level into doubt', but does not see this alternative imperialist agenda in 'socialist' terms, a view echoed by Horace B. Davis.[89]

Just how 'imperialist' Hobson's scheme would have been depends on the degree to which we presume Hobson conceded that mandatory control might remain in the hands of former imperial powers – as the League did – as opposed to being invested in a higher, less greedily self-interested, more impartial and humanitarian, and hence supposedly less exploitative international body. It also depends on exactly how such a body actually proceeded on its mission. Others at the time certainly harboured reservations about such procedures. In 1906, for example, Belgian socialists discussed the transfer of Congolese control from Belgium to an international consortium consisting of those who had signed the Berlin Agreement of 1885. But one, Vandervelde, also thought that this would merely perpetuate imperial

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[89] Cain. *Hobson*, p. 145; Michael Freeden. 'Introduction', in Freeden. *Reappraising J. A. Hobson*, p. 5; John Allett. *New Liberalism. The Political Economy of J. A. Hobson* (Toronto, 1981), pp. 170–2; J. Townshend. 'J. A. Hobson: Anti-Imperialist?' *IRHPS*, 19 (1982), 28–41; Long. *Towards a New Liberal Internationalism*, pp. 115–19, 187; Horace B. Davis. 'Hobson and Human Welfare', *S&S*, 21 (1957), 313–15.

exploitation, and possibly even worsen it.[90] That Hobson justified involuntary, coercive development of natural resources is, however, as we have seen, beyond dispute. Compared with the position adopted by, for instance, Malcolm Quin, Hobson's position in *Imperialism* is, however, indisputably 'imperialist' if we accept its coercive provision as essential to this label.

But should we fairly describe it as 'socialist'? Hobson's reputation as a 'New Liberal' is usually linked to the notoriously skeletal *Confessions*. Yet despite a clear distancing of his views in the post-war period from anything like Bolshevism, an identification with a looser and more generic brand of socialism is reasonably uncontentious. Hobson himself insisted that 'Socialism means the democratic control of industry, in which the managers would be elected, directly or indirectly, by the body of citizens.' He acknowledged in 1907 that it was proper for Liberals to denounce 'the extremities of "social democracy"', meaning the ownership and control of all instruments of production and exchange while forcing all to work as public employees. He also, however, proposed that there was 'a Socialism to which, by past history and present intentions, they are committed, and it is right that they should realise its meaning', a 'genuine Socialism, inasmuch as it involves the adoption of new functions by the State, increased interference with private enterprise and private property, and an expansion of the area of public employment'. Lecturing on 'The Psychology of Socialism' in 1908, too, Hobson asserted that

Society must form a social soul, and this was to be achieved by the substitution of social interest for individual interest, by forming a conscious central life for society . . . He thought the conception of society as a moral organism was a sound one, and that Socialism was the means of realising its fullest possibilities . . . The struggle for life does not cease under Socialism, but becomes a struggle for a higher life.[91]

In Hobson's later writings his commitment to a stronger international government was not only undiminished, but at key points was also cast in a specifically socialist form. 'Modern capitalism is so transforming the common situation that a form of "Socialism" (national & international) is recognised as necessary by Liberals as well as by Labourists,' he wrote in 1928. 'Nationality as a basis of government must and will have its proper and important place in the wider application of democracy,' he echoed in 1934, while insisting that 'national democracy must shed its claim to absolute

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[90] Braunthal. *History of the International*, p. 316.
[91] Hobson. 'Mr Mallock as Political Economist', *CR*, 73 (1898), 539; Hobson. 'The Four-Fold Path of Socialism', *The Nation*, 2 (30 Nov. 1907), 302–3; *Justice* (22 Feb. 1908), 2.

sovereignty and must cede to a federal world-government powers necessary to deal with issues of international or, more properly, supernational import'. In the long run he hoped that such a scheme would become a 'fully developed Society of Nations on a democratic socialistic basis' which 'would organise the material and human productive resources of each country in relation, not exclusively to the needs and gains of its own inhabitants, but to those of humanity at large'. He admitted that the 'economic application of the democratic principle to the functions of world-federalism would be unlikely, for some generations, to proceed to so strict a limitation of national self-government'. But he also stressed that 'it would be foolish, even at the outset of the experiment, to limit the powers ceded to the international government so closely as to place difficulties in the way of their enlargement to meet the new requirements of a changing world'. Somewhat later he also distinguished his own proposals from those of H. G. Wells's world-state ideal:

holding that large sections of governmental work in industry must continue to be exercised within national limits, I should content myself with an insistence that the international government which is slowly struggling into being shall be invested with sufficient federal power to over-ride the selfish policies of surviving national interests and animosities operative in the economic field.[92]

Hobson also had no difficulty terming another of his great mentors, Ruskin, a socialist, meaning by this 'not only a humanist in the realm of industry ... he believed that industry should be directed by the motive of social good, not of individual gain'. He referred to himself in his autobiography as a 'semi-Socialist in the Press, and sometimes on the platform'.[93] He was happy to contribute not only frequently to the socialist press, but equally to pamphlets, providing an introduction to J. Bruce Glasier's *The Meaning of Socialism*, in which he plumped for his own view that 'the most profitable labour for Socialism is in the field of "humanism"', while deriding the lack of 'driving power' of 'scientific socialism'. During his life he was more often than not linked to socialists of one type or another. A Fabian paper noted that 'in his outlook on industrial problems Mr Hobson is completely Socialist and modern'. Another socialist paper termed him

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[92] Manchester Guardian Archive, A/H69/13b; Hobson. *Democracy and a Changing Civilisation* (1934), pp. 144, 146; Hobson. *Wealth and Life*, p. 390. Hobson described 'the cosmopolitan humanity of Mr Wells' as 'the soundest long-range policy for thoughtful men', while doubting that it could be applied immediately ('Rationalism and Ethics', *SPMR*, Apr. 1939, 3–5).

[93] Hobson. 'Ruskin as an Economist', in John Howard Whitehouse, ed., *Ruskin the Prophet* (1910), p. 92; Hobson. *Confessions*, p. 64.

'one of the middle-class theorists of the ILP'.[94] Another noted more ambiguously that Hobson 'claims to be a Liberal, and is a very queer fish in that camp'. G. D. H. Cole described him as a Liberal up to 1914 and a 'moderate, evolutionary Socialist' after 1918. The Positivist J. H. Bridges called Hobson a 'philosophic Socialist', partly on the grounds that in repudiating abstract right while keeping 'right socially interpreted ... he is in nearer agreement with Comte than some of Comte's disciples seem to be aware'.[95] H. N. Brailsford claimed that Ruskin's influence on Hobson 'led eventually to Socialism'.[96] The more sophisticated modern secondary literature, while still often preferring to term Hobson a 'New Liberal', none the less recognises that there are many affinities with socialism here.[97] Hobson himself addressed the same theme on a number of other occasions.[98] And other modern critics refer to him as having embraced a 'liberal-socialism, where the State had a role alongside individualism and private ownership of capital'.[99] In the most sustained recent examination of this theme, Jules Townshend has noted in an article on 'Hobson and the Socialist Tradition' that Hobson 'was quite content to assert that his socio-economic prescriptions constituted "progressive socialism" or "practical socialism" or that he was advocating a "middle policy of socialism"'. (But he does not extend this analysis to Hobson's imperialism.)[100]

In fact this classification can be advocated even more strongly if we specify more precisely what it means: Hobson's repeated reference to himself as a socialist entailed the acceptance of a substantial public sector, with certain economic activity being left to private enterprise, particularly small workshops fashioning artistic or refined products. In 1898 he distinguished between 'routine' industry, which would be organised under the rubric of 'state socialism', and the retention of 'Individualism', 'to supply the more refined, erratic, individualistic demands of the citizens'. In 1899 he again advocated mixing public and private economic ownership, and excluding from public control only that 'industry which is wholesome, interesting, and educative', which could not 'conveniently or profitably be submitted to the essentially mechanical routine of state officialism, and ... need not be so regulated'. All 'mechanical routine industries'

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[94] Glasier. *The Meaning of Socialism*, pp. xii, xiv; *Fabian News* (May 1910), 47; *The Socialist* (Apr. 1918), 72.

[95] *NA* (30 Dec. 1909), 198; *EJ*, 50 (1940), 357; *PR* (1901), 216.

[96] H. N. Brailsford. *The Life Work of J. A. Hobson* (Oxford, 1948), p. 7.

[97] See, most notably, Michael Freeden. *The New Liberalism* (Oxford, 1978), esp. pp. 25–32.

[98] E.g., Hobson. *The Crisis of Liberalism*, pp. 133–8.

[99] Hodgart. *The Economics of European Imperialism*, p. 28.

[100] Jules Townshend. 'Hobson and the Socialist Tradition', in John Pheby, ed., *J. A. Hobson after Fifty Years* (1994), pp. 34–52, and Townshend. *Hobson*, pp. 19–20.

were to be subject to 'progressive socialisation'. 'Socialism alone', he wrote elsewhere the same year, 'among organised political forces, stedfastly and persistently appeals to the common bond of material and moral interest among men, independent of race, nationality, sect, or colour.' As late as 1932 he insisted that the 'limits of practicable socialism will be the public control and ordering of those industries which produce, carry and distribute, the routine or standardised goods and services, which mankind requires for the satisfaction of his ordinary physical and mental needs'. In 1936 he reiterated, describing his own ideals, that 'the Socialism here envisaged' meant that banks, coal mines, railways 'and other key industries were nationalised'.[101] Hobson often used the term socialism loosely to mean 'a general term of description for the tendency to substitute collective for private control', which was fairly all-inclusive.[102] He did not, however, support the wholesale nationalisation of industry, regarding this as promoting too much bureaucracy. We may safely say that Hobson considered the end of society to be the enrichment of individual personality and enhancement of utility on a global scale, and thought of socialism, so long as it did not unduly curtail liberty, as the most likely means of attaining this end so long as its attainment was 'gradual' and at all times 'attuned to the civic spirit'. There is no doubt that he conceived of the process of tropical exploitation in terms of a 'fair trade' ideal of distributive justice, enforcing the same principles here as in an internal socialist regime. In later years he continued to distinguish between the advantages of 'unstandardisable' private ownership and a 'standardisable' state sector.[103] By the time he published *Property and Improperty* (1937), too, Hobson had also come to argue that foreign trade should be conducted chiefly by the state, with some limited private investment abroad remaining. This brought him even closer to a number of socialist imperialists of the Boer War epoch, and took him farther from Cobden than ever. But he remained sceptical as to the possibility of any 'complete world-organisation of industry', writing in 1932 that this 'would demand a confidence and an "enthusiasm for humanity" that lie outside the present limits of the attainable'.[104]

[101] *EW* (5 Sep. 1898), 564; (18 Mar. 1899), 168–9; J. E. Hand, ed. *Good Citizenship* (1899), pp. 105–6; J. A. Hobson. *From Capitalism to Socialism* (1932), p. 38; *The New Statesman and Nation*, 258 (1 Feb. 1936), 144–5.

[102] J. A. Hobson. 'Half-Century Progress in Social Ethics', *MRSPES* (May 1926), 4–5.

[103] Hobson. 'How Much Socialism?', *The Nation*, 45 (22 June 1929), 391–2; (26 Oct. 1907), 118–19; Hobson. *Property and Improperty* (1937), e.g., p. 194.

[104] Hobson. *From Capitalism to Socialism*, p. 35.

We have seen so far that Hobson by 1902 had settled upon a scheme of international economic development in which the deplorable excesses of capitalistic imperialism would be avoided by substituting international supervisory bodies for direct and unprotected exploitation by existing private capitalists, and by requiring the actual improvement of native populations to accompany such exploitation. There is no reason to presume that Hobson departed significantly from this agenda thereafter. But *Imperialism* left him with another troublesome problem: describing an ethical norm which dictated a duty to 'humanity' in order to encourage loyalty beyond the nation-state. Hobson was clearly not satisfied that a growing commonality of experience was sufficient to provide a basis for the *sentiment* of allegiance to 'humanity'. He believed that it was necessary to identify an ideal of 'mankind as a single community' if nationalists were not to have the final word on the issue of moral obligation. He also had as we have seen a strong commitment to an 'Ethicist' solution to this problem. But what did this mean, and how should it be distinguished from Positivist proscriptions for the same problem?

In *The Crisis of Liberalism* (1909) Hobson restated the problem. Both D. G. Ritchie and Bernard Bosanquet seemingly insisted 'that "the general will" cannot be deemed to have any real meaning outside the nation, for there is no adequate community of needs and interests through which it can function'. Yet surely, thought Hobson, to acknowledge 'that we owe it to ourselves to help another nation struggling to be free, that it is a proper and noble thing to do', was 'in effect an acknowledgment of a "right" in that other nation to claim our aid, an admission that the two nations are members of a human society'. But convergent experience did not alone justify this right:

while admitting the importance of such extensions of what Bosanquet terms 'the common experience necessary to form a common life', as nutriment to a super-national mind, I would enter a protest against the assumption that our sense of the rights and obligations of humanity is formed entirely by such actual contacts. A sense of equity, of what is due to others, can have a strong purchase upon our will and our conduct, though we have no direct contact with these 'others', and do not even know who they are.

Somehow, then, this sense of 'equity' had to be developed and encouraged. The ideal of 'mankind as a single community' had to be first imagined and then fleshed out, probably in federative form. Twenty years later he would note that

it is not sufficient that the loyalty to one's nation shall be supplanted by the wider feeling for humanity. The question of conflicting loyalties arises. The hundred-per-cent patriot prefers the good, or the supposed good, of his country to that of the world. The humanist position demands that the wider loyalty must prevail. Where areas of allegiance are organised, as they must be, for effective cooperation, this signifies that a federal system must develop in which the final voice is vested in the federal government.[105]

Hobson thus clearly identified as 'humanist' the sentiment of a common feeling for humanity, and this label has indeed often been applied to encapsulate his thought in general.[106] But what can we say about the *sources* of *Imperialism*'s idea of 'mankind as a single community', which became for Hobson the ethical principle underlying his pleas for international government? Hobson scholars, while usually paying little heed to this passage, generally steer us towards an 'organicist' ideal drawn partly from John Ruskin and partly from evolutionary theory.[107] Leonard Hobhouse, too, was certainly one of the sources of the latter trend, though the influence was mutual.[108] As Hobson wrote in 1929, referring to 'Professor Hobhouse's great work', *Development and Purpose* (1913), it was only when

purpose with an increasingly moral significance is recognised as the *vis motrix* in social evolution, that we are able properly to envisage a unified social science and art, which can take for their subject matter the whole scope of human conduct regarded from the standpoint of welfare or value.

Hobson also noted that Hobhouse's 'stress on personality as the end and object of all social processes carried a denial of any group or social mind other than the orderly interplay of individual minds and reduced such a term as "*esprit de corps*" to a personal feeling common to the members of a co-operative group'.[109] It was, in other words, neither religious nor metaphysical in the usual senses of the words.

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[105] Hobson. *Wealth and Life*, pp. 250–1, 397–9.

[106] E.g., C. Delisle Burns. 'J. A. Hobson: the Humanist', *SPMR* (May 1940), 3–4: 'Humanism is the best word for expressing the attitude of J. A. Hobson and the spirit which animated his work.' Hobson defined the term to mean 'that the whole of Humanity is our concern' (*Hibbert Journal*, 20, July 1922, 676).

[107] Hobson wrote of Ruskin that 'though he did not philosophise upon the "organic" nature of the State, did always insist upon imputing to it that nature, premising that both the science and the art of Political Economy should be constructed from the standpoint of the well-being of the whole society' (*John Ruskin*, 1898, p. 81).

[108] Hobhouse follows Hobson in condemning imperialism as 'racial ascendancy', and juxtaposes it to a liberal ideal of 'self-government' (*Democracy and Reaction*, pp. 13–56). On their relations see Duncan Bell. 'Democracy and Empire: Hobson, Hobhouse, and the Crisis of Liberalism', in Ian Hall and Lisa Hill, eds., *British International Thought* (2009).

[109] Hobson. *Wealth and Life*, p. 131; Hobson. *Confessions*, p. 77. See Leonard Hobhouse. 'The Ethical Basis of Collectivism', *IJE* (Jan. 1898), 137–56.

It is certainly, however, worth examining the proposition that both Hobson and Hobhouse, following Clarke, saw themselves as wedding an evolutionary perspective to some variant on Positivism in this period. This involved clearly moving beyond the mainstream Positivists' 'distrust of Darwinism' (in Patrick Geddes's words), which had 'too much prevented them from looking into the matter of evolution at all', as they felt Comte was uninterested in the origins of life as such if receptive to ideas of species transmutation. Hobhouse, certainly, regarded 'humanitarianism' as the 'culmination of all previous ethical and religious developments', and thought Comte had provided its 'best general definition':

seeing that it is only in the great and good men that we come into contact through actual experience with the spiritual; and of effort in the sense that the development of what is great and good in man, the wider extension and the deeper harmonisation of human life, is itself the supreme end which gives meaning and value to all the older religions.[110]

'Collective humanity, as a being that never dies, but grows, learns and develops throughout the ages' was Comte's ideal, which Hobhouse vigorously defended as the appropriate 'object of a new religion, a religion dealing with realities and based on science'. The Positive religion struck the right balance in proclaiming human duties, for it taught that

We must love our country, but not so as to wish it to dominate all others. Our chief pride in it must lie in our sense of the service that it renders to humanity, just as the only legitimate pride that we can feel in our own achievements or in the career of those near and dear to us should depend on the extent to which those achievements or that career has been of service to the world at large.

The 'self-directing Humanity of Comte' thus met wholly with Hobhouse's approval, even if according to Victor Branford, he remained uninterested in Geddes's civic schemes.[111] 'Humanity', Hobhouse wrote in 1913, 'in the sense which the best Positive writers have given to that word, Humanity as the spirit of harmony and expanding life, shaping the best actions of the best men and women, is the highest incarnation known to us of the divine.' He

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[110] Liveing. *A Nineteenth Century Teacher*, p. 5, Bridges being the leading exception; J. H. Bridges. 'Evolution and Positivism', *FR*, 28 (1877), 105–9; Hobhouse. *Questions of War and Peace* (1916), pp. 63–4.

[111] Hobhouse. *Morals in Evolution* (1915), pp. 591–3; Branford to Geddes, 31 Dec. 1908, Branford Papers. A general appraisal of Comte's influence on Hobhouse is given in John E. Owen. *L. T. Hobhouse* (Columbus, Ohio, 1974), pp. 11–12. See also Peter Weiler. 'The New Liberalism of L. T. Hobhouse', *VS*, 16 (1972–3), 141–61. Hobhouse's sympathy towards Comte – he is described as a 'fellow-traveller' of Positivism – is, however, scarcely treated in Stefan Collini. *Liberalism and Sociology. L. T. Hobhouse and Political Argument in England 1880–1914* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 151n.

lectured to the Positivists on various occasions, for instance on 'Evolution and Humanitarianism' in 1903.[112] His correspondence with Frederic Harrison betrays an intimate knowledge of Comtist doctrine.[113] He contributed a preface to a biographical tribute to his close friend John Henry Bridges, to whom he was related by marriage. To some Positivists he became 'perhaps the nearest to Comte of all post-Comtian sociologists in following what we hold to be the most important truth in Comte's system, viz., that the evolution of mind is, or should be, the guiding principle in sociology'. Hobhouse was also clearly inspired by Positivism in his insistence that there was 'no distinction in principle capable of any logical justification between individual and national ethics', and in regarding 'true patriotism' as 'the corner-stone of true internationalism'.[114] Hobhouse became one of Hobson's 'closest friends' after they discussed the latter's 1899 article on 'Imperialism', which led Hobhouse, then employed on the *Manchester Guardian*, to encourage his editor to send Hobson to South Africa to report on the war. The restatement of some of the central arguments of *Imperialism* in *The Crisis of Liberalism* (1909) may well have been influenced by the evolutionary perspective presented in Hobhouse's *Democracy and Reaction* (1904).[115] For Hobhouse was clearly working along very similar lines. In the 'higher societies', he wrote, the process of 'ethico-religious teaching' was that

primitive divisions of class, caste, race, or nationality are replaced by the conception of humanity as a whole, the arbitrary and irrational elements which survive from primitive custom are shed, and the conception of duty becomes remodelled on the basis of a rational understanding of the actual needs of individual and social life . . . there arises by degrees the ideal of collective humanity, self-determining in its progress, as the supreme object of human activity, and the final standard by which the laws of conduct should be judged.[116]

It can be suggested, thus, that throughout this period Hobson too envisioned the problem of a 'single community' at least partly in Positivist terms. His reasons for not acknowledging the proximity of 'humanism' to 'Humanity' are not difficult to discover: he did not like Comte, and, first and foremost, disapproved strongly of his undemocratic politics. In a caustic

[112] Hobhouse. *Development and Purpose* (1913), p. 371; *PR* (1903), 72.
[113] E.g., Harrison Papers, 1/42, f. 52.
[114] Liveing. *A Nineteenth Century Teacher*, pp. xiii–xv; F. S. Marvin. *Comte* (1936), p. 185; Hobhouse. *Democracy and Reaction*, p. 207; Hobhouse. *Morals in Evolution*, p. 269.
[115] Whose view of imperialism the *Positivist Review* described as 'the text on which the Positivist Society and the Positivist *Review* have argued ever since their foundation' (1903, 283).
[116] Hobhouse. *Democracy and Reaction*, pp. 107–8.

aside of 1906 he mocked 'the caste of learned prigs whom Comte set up',[117] which he also linked to the 'ridiculous ineptitude' of the 're-moralised rent-takers and profit-mongers to whom Carlyle and Ruskin looked', a 'moral individualism' which Hobson rejected because of the impossibility of ever persuading the wealthy to devote their resources voluntarily to the public good.[118] A 'so-called Socialism from above', Hobson insisted, 'embodying the patronage of [an] emperor or of a small enlightened bureaucracy, is not Socialism in any moral sense at all'. He also considered Comte's schemata of social evolution as too 'abruptly divided', and at a 1907 meeting of the Sociological Society commemorating Comte's death, where Hobhouse termed Comte's contribution to defining 'self-conscious humanity' 'one of the greatest, if not the greatest, the history of thought has yet to record', grumpily complained that he 'knew nothing about the subject under discussion to-night' and if possible even less after it was concluded.[119] He furthermore disagreed 'profoundly' with Harrison's anti-feminist ideas.[120] Thus Hobson did not acknowledge Comte's influence in his sparse description of his intellectual trajectory towards 'humanism'; it was Ruskin who was given the starring role.[121] By 1910 he was referring to Positivism as a 'rejected creed … gathering illustrious disciples in a religion of Eugenics'.[122] Despite praising its 'genuinely sympathetic attitude towards all the spiritual experiments of the past and present', and acknowledging that its religion had 'much to recommend it' thus, Hobson was none the less critical of Positivism's 'tone of intellectual and moral dogmatism', and averred that 'Humanity, as seen in history, does not present to most persons an object of whole-hearted reverence or of assured evolution towards an ideal which can be held before the mind or emotions as a thing to worship.'[123]

Yet it would be surprising if Positivism had not made a greater impact on Hobson's intellectual formation. Frederic Harrison after all once defined 'ethicists', not unreasonably, as 'simply Positivists *minus* the definite

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[117] Hobson. 'The New Aristocracy of Mr Wells', 489.
[118] Comte's followers, Hobson asserted, 'imposed upon their ideal society an aristocracy with similar temporal and spiritual powers to those which Mr Ruskin assigns to his upper classes' (*Ruskin*, p. 195).
[119] Hobson. *Ruskin*, p. 204; Branford Papers, Misc. Corr., and the much more circumspect account in *PR* (1907), 282–3.
[120] *MG* (6 Oct. 1908), 7.
[121] 'From him I drew the basic thought for my subsequent economic writings, viz. the necessity of going behind the current monetary estimates of wealth, cost, and utility, to reach the body of human benefits and satisfactions which gave them a real meaning' (Hobson. *Confessions*, p. 42).
[122] Hobson. *A Modern Outlook* (1910), p. 237.   [123] *MG* (28 Feb. 1913), 5.

dogmas and formulae of Comte'.[124] Having become a 'religious heretic' in the late 1870s, at least by his second year at Oxford,[125] Hobson found himself surrounded by Positivists from the early 1890s onwards: William Clarke; a host of other Fabian sympathisers influenced by Comte, including Pease and Olivier; James Ramsay Macdonald,[126] a collaborator on the *Progressive Review* from 1896 to 1898; several Rainbow Club members; Positivist socialists like F. J. Gould; fellow Ruskinians like Harrison; sociologists like Geddes and Branford who wedded Comte to Le Play, whom Hobson praised in the *Confessions*;[127] John Morley; and others. 'Members of the Ethical Societies will recognise the identity of the Positivist ideal with our own,' announced the *Ethical World*, edited by Hobson.[128] He knew Geddes fairly well, having met him before 1900, the latter writing to him in 1929 that Hobson had 'always had sympathies on our lines – expressed them well – as from Ruskin's defense to your vigorous puncturing of imperialisms, etc., so if anyone can help us, it is surely you!'[129] He was also acquainted with Ingram's political economy, which Comte's influence pervaded.[130] Hobson was fully aware that the Positivists, and especially Harrison, had done much to foment the revolt against classical political economy which had now become central to him. He clearly was at one with the Positivists' insistence upon the social nature of property, which he regarded as the basis for the state's right to supervise 'social property'.[131] His approach to this, as for some Positivists, was through an organicist 'fact or analogy': 'a clear grasp of Society as an economic organism completely explodes the notion of property as an inherent individual right, for it shows

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[124] Vogeler. *Frederic Harrison*, p. 220. The *Ethical World* would in turn describe Harrison as the 'father' of the word 'ethicist' (8 July 1899, 427), meaning those who pursued ethical truth as such rather than metaphysical theory.

[125] Hobson. *Confessions*, pp. 20–1.

[126] Hobson said of Macdonald that 'his endeavour to formulate an interpretation of social evolution at once spiritual and economic is a noteworthy advance upon anything that has been done in the theory of English Socialism' (*LL*, 27 Oct. 1905, 358).

[127] Hobson. *Confessions*, p. 75. Branford termed Hobson 'the most socialised of our Economists' (Geddes Papers, University of Strathclyde, 2/1/5). They first met in 1904 ('A Tribute to the Memory of Victor Branford', *SR*, 23, 1931, 195).

[128] *EW* (11 Jan. 1902), 12.   [129] Geddes Papers, NLS, MS 10532, f. 133; 10518, f. 45.

[130] Ingram's *History of Political Economy* is cited in Hobson. *Free-Thought in the Social Sciences*, p. 71.

[131] Hobson. 'Rights of Property', *Free Review*, 1 (Nov. 1893), 146. Brailsford thought Hobson accepted property 'within wide limits as a necessary organ for the extension and realization of human personality' and did not regard 'property in the means of production as necessarily anti-social, as Socialists commonly do' (*The Life-Work of J. A. Hobson*, pp. 17–18). Brailsford himself later supported the right 'even on a large scale, to take land of which native tribes are making a wasteful and inadequate use – if it contains minerals or oil which the world urgently needs, or if it is exceptionally fertile soil suited for the growth of some scarce but necessary tropical produce, which no persuasion or education will induce the natives to grow themselves' (*Olives of Endless Age*, 1928, p. 300).

that no individual can make or appropriate anything of value without the direct continuous assistance of Society'. He agreed equally with them that 'while he has no *right* as an individual, he has a *duty* as a member of Society to contribute as best he can to the administration of the common property for the common good'. Hobson would occasionally flirt with Positivist terminology, too, notably as we have seen in his comment in 1900 that the 'maxim, "Live openly", is patently impossible for Imperialism. The judgement, voice and vote of the ordinary citizen cannot intrude into regions of politics where secrecy is held to be essential.' This 'maxim' was one of the most famous, definitive and obviously recognisable Positivist slogans.[132] There is also evidence that he discussed with Frederic Harrison either taking over or collaborating with the *Positivist Review* around 1901, which implies his reasonably close proximity to its outlook.[133] And Positivism clearly lurks behind Hobson's 1899 description of the need for cities and states to maintain a 'true civic relation'. 'The problem is chiefly one of sympathy in life,' Hobson insisted, such that 'Nottingham or Leicester is a sounder size for an English city than London, or even Liverpool.'[134]

It would appear then that Hobson, for whom freethought was an essential part of his own identity, had considered the Positivist case very carefully, as indeed we would expect from someone who had been lecturing at the South Place Institute since 1892, and taken from it just exactly what he required and nothing more.[135] By the time it had matured in the later 1890s, his own 'humanism' was a well-crafted, carefully argued ideal which had three components: economic, ethical and religious. Perhaps his own most distinctive contribution was that rooted in a utilitarian ideal of economics. In *Imperialism* Hobson discusses 'the principle of social utility ... expanded to its widest range, so as to be synonymous with "the good of humanity"'. He stressed here that the primary function of 'humanism' was to maximise utility. In 1920 he repeated that he was 'merely maintaining the utilitarian ethics which insist that morality, the performance of human obligations ... in the long run will yield the fullest satisfaction to social beings'. Writing in 1922, he described the limits of what we would today term methodological individualism, which forced any conception of social utility to be calculated as the sum of individual utilities rather than

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[132] Hobson. 'The Re-Statement of Democracy', *CR*, 81 (1902), 266, 268; *NA* (Mar. 1900), 100. He also insisted in his study of Ruskin that '"Live openly" is not merely an ethical precept binding upon the individual good citizen, but a public interest to be enforced by public provision' (*Ruskin*, p. 177). Gould identified it as the chief maxim of Comte (*Comte*, p. 98). Comte called it 'my motto' (*Letters*, p. 58).

[133] Murray Papers, 8, ff. 51–2.   [134] *EW* (22 July 1898), 450.   [135] Burns. 'J. A. Hobson'.

measured by some other criterion. He insisted, however, that the 'added goods of each do not figure out as the greatest good of all'. Instead he argued that this 'separatist fallacy' rested on two assumptions:

The first is that all men are so nearly identical in wants, desires, and interests that the best which each can do for himself will be his best contribution to the community. The second is that in the last resort there is no community, no humanity, but only a number of separate persons, and that all right or reasonable conduct should be devoted to and measured by the benefit of these separate persons.

'Community in the sense of citizenship, nationality, humanity', thought Hobson, was instead 'in the last resort resolvable into enriched personality'.[136]

Secondly, 'humanism' had an ethical component. Here the language of evolutionary 'organicism' was central. Hobson's position was virtually identical here with that of Hobhouse, who as we have seen declared a substantial debt to Comte. Hobson was unhappy with any formulation of this problem which did not reflect the 'scientific', that is to say 'organic', aspect of the issue. Without doubt he conceived of this quasi-evolutionary dimension in terms of the emergence of a more all-encompassing, socialised 'personality' which would eventually supersede the shallow egotistical hedonism of the capitalist era. In a 1912 article, Hobson provided a diagram of the 'concentric circles of widening area' which extended from self, including family, through city, nation to mankind, or 'Humanity'. He noted that 'our type of desirable personality is different from what it would have been in the middle of the nineteenth century ... A wider outlook and a wider sympathy are wanted.' The 'emotional character of the "self"', he lamented, had 'not adjusted to the actual facts of the concrete solidarity of members of the different nations'. 'Personality' had not caught up with 'the objective internationalism which is taking place'. Educating it to do so, by a process of international civic education, was thus clearly the task of 'humanism', which regarded 'Humanity as the highest manifestation of the universal power', and did 'not consider it as a thing apart from nature, the be-all and end-all of the great cosmic scheme'.[137]

Thirdly, these ethical and evolutionary perspectives were also wedded to the religious aspect of Hobson's 'humanism'. Virtually nothing has been written about Hobson's religious views as such. In a number of revealing

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[136] Hobson. *Imperialism*, p. 232; *Confessions*, p. 137; *The Morals of Economic Internationalism* (New York, 1920), pp. 43–4; *Rationalism and Humanism* (1933), pp. 20–3.
[137] Hobson. 'Character and Society', in Percy Parker, ed., *Character and Life* (1912), pp. 78–9, 103.

texts, however, Hobson indicated that he conceived of religion as functioning in a manner different from that proposed by most socialists and Positivists alike. In *A Modern Outlook* (1910) he took up the complaint that the existing 'Christian churches are ... incapacitated from exercising moral influence over modern economic life, partly because their adherents do not serious profess or apply the teaching of Christ, partly because they are aware that any attempt to apply it would fail and would quicken the process of dismemberment.' He contended that there was 'a stronger case to be made for a religion, stripped of all theology and magic, that can supply this need, a definitely human religion which can apply to the support of our industrial and other institutions the principles and ideals of a rational ethic'. But he also noted that

> though such co-operative zeal for human welfare is the kernel of a possible religion, it does not comprehend it. Hence ethics has not the monopoly of the religious sentiment. Science and philosophy set no such limit upon our interest. An attitude of curiosity and a feeling of community with nature in its widest sense are needed to complete the new structure of a rationalist religion.

Respecting the role religion might play in reining in the more destructive aspects of capitalism, Hobson argued that to 'conceive Socialism, or, indeed, any other purely social ideal, as the spirit or the content of religion, demanding the supreme devotion of the energy of the churches, is ... to mistake profoundly the meaning of the religious life'. But Positivism could also be too limited. Hobson insisted that 'the great heresy, for which positivism stands' lay in 'its insistence that humanity upon this earth, or, indeed, in any other supra-mundane sphere, [was] the sole and final object of the reverence and devotion of man'. This was, then, clearly a role to be played by 'religion' rather than solely ethics, which could not

> claim, either now or in the future, to absorb, or even to dominate, religion. For the sphere of religion like that of philosophy, must be primarily concerned with the relation of man to the unity and power of the universe, whether regarded as an object of contemplation for the philosopher, or of reverent emotion for the devotee. His relation to 'society,' his fellow-men, is secondary and derivative both for the understanding and the feelings ... The spirit of religion must transcend humanity, seeking a One which is higher and holier.[138]

In 1922, Hobson again made it evident that many of his thoughts in this area involved a dialogue with Positivism, and an effort to get beyond what he regarded as the weaknesses of its religious ideal. It was necessary, he now

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[138] Hobson. *A Modern Outlook* (1910), pp. 56–7, 247–8.

said, 'to reform all our social institutions from the small unit of the family right through up to the State and the organization of States, so as to infuse into the whole network of our social relations and institutions the spirit of equity and of solidarity', concluding: 'So much for what might be called the religion of humanity.' (And everyone listening would have known what he meant, despite the lower case printed report.) He then added that

But the religion that I am trying to sketch before you is not only this: it implies not only communion of man with man, but communion of man with nature, with the universe, and that not as a mystical merger, but as a clear conception of man's place in nature, and men and nature as part of an ever-changing nature – a changing order with order in that change.

Here then he revealed that he preferred 'to regard the inner life of religion as more concerned with the reverence for the whole than with the love of a manlike God, because this anthropomorphism necessarily belittles and narrows the religious sentiment of communion with nature'. Religion, as he conceived it, then, had

for its practical task to modify and transmute not only the individual selfishness of man, but his sentimental and collective self-importance, as if the universe existed simply for his good, to promote his growth, and even in some sense his private property. Perhaps this is the last hiding-place of the property instinct, the last screen for the egoism of humanity.[139]

In 1931 Hobson wrote of his desire for 'a religion, stripped of all theology and magic ... a definitely human religion which can apply to the support of our industrial and other institutions the principles and ideals of a rational ethic'. Here, however, he again explicitly added that it had been Positivism's failure 'to include nature, save as a contribution towards the progress of humanity, that was responsible in part for the slight hold Comte and his disciples attained, as well as its mimicking of certain Catholic ceremonies'. His own view was now defined as comprising 'an enlightened utilitarianism, in which bodily satisfactions would have their proper place along with spiritual, under a system of thought in which the division of body and spirit is not regarded as an ultimate division of nature'. Hobson thus did not embrace the Religion of Humanity, but clearly did accept the substance of Positivist ethics, 'the enthusiasm of humanity for a common and a worthy cause', as well as its associated civic ethos. But this overlapped with other brands of internationalism, and 'a recognition of nature as the larger and higher value'.[140]

[139] Hobson. 'The Expression of Religion in Daily Life', *The Humanist* (1 Jan. 1922), 7–9.
[140] Hobson. *God and Mammon* (1931), pp. 57–8.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has argued that contextualising Hobson's *Imperialism* involves seeing the text in light of an ongoing debate about empire and its implications which dated back to the socialists of the early 1880s, and to Positivism, as well as Cobdenism. We have seen here that Hobson's outlook on empire underwent important shifts at the time of the Boer War, the upshot of which was to bring him much closer to a 'socialist-imperialist' outlook, though dissenting notably from the dominant Fabian line on nationalism, where Positivist influences are evident. To conclude our account here, we must now briefly reassess the chronology of anti-imperialist positions charted so far in order to establish how the leading trends on the left towards a 'socialist commonwealth' ideal in fact emerged, as well as what this implied more generally for theories of the state at the end of the First World War.

Conclusion: the fruits of imperial scepticism: more sovereignty and less

Readers will draw their own deductions from any book, and these will not necessarily be those of even the most persuasive author. A study like the present, in any case, is not susceptible of a single conclusion, but rather points in several directions.

Our starting-point here was the broad presumption that the critical shift in British attitudes towards the empire has traditionally been identified with the Boer War, with Hobson's *Imperialism* marking the origins of the theoretically most incisive dissection of the sources and consequences of modern imperialism. The argument presented here has tried to alter this view of the growing antipathy to imperialism in Britain in the previous period in five ways. Firstly, we have seen that, rather than one, there were three definitive moments in the formation of a critical stance towards imperialism rooted in ethical considerations: the origins of Positivist analysis after 1855, peaking with James Geddes's pathbreaking account of Indian finance in the early 1870s; the invasion of Egypt in 1882, which first placed the 'bondholder' hypothesis before the wider public; and the Boer War, in which the influence of finance capitalists on imperial policy was presumed by its critics to be definitive. This chronology demonstrates that the genealogy of anti-imperialism was not only much more elongated, but also much more indebted to Positivism, than is usually acknowledged. The Positivist contribution to anti-imperialist writing from the mid-1850s until after 1920 was extraordinarily rich, far-reaching and diverse. Positivists first systematically and critically traced the origin of imperialism to a desire to acquire export markets and invest 'surplus' capital, here building upon, but then breaking from, a tradition laid by political economy and the imperial critique of Cobden and Bright. Their chief initial focus was India, followed by Ireland and Egypt, but no part of the empire was left untouched by their condemnation, which first suggested the wholesale abandonment of all the European empires as well as the relinquishment of free trade as an instrument for promoting international order. This

assessment of the economic causes of imperialism would eventually become one of the dominant themes in anti-imperialist thought. Even more narrowly, by the early twentieth century a focus upon financiers as the architects of all that was most ruinous in British imperial policy was not uncommon, and was increasingly applied backwards to account for earlier expansion. Thus the journalist G. W. Russell insisted in 1903 that

Finance went near to involving us in war on behalf of Turkey in 1878. Finance actually involved us in all the miseries and disgraces of our Egyptian policy in 1882. At such times of national crisis the bondholder exercises an influence on Government all the more pernicious because it is unseen and untraceable. In that influence is to be found the cause of the gravest crimes and most startling blunders which Ministries, both Liberal and Conservative, commit.[1]

We should be wary, however, of privileging one form of economic explanation for empire unduly. For the 'bondholder' hypothesis co-existed beside a variety of other economic analyses of imperial expansion, notably a much earlier emphasis on markets for manufactured goods, as well as a range of psychological and political motives. None the less the 'peer relief' account of expansion doubtless declined sharply during the 1870s and 1880s, as the 'Jingo creed', as William Clarke termed it, that 'commercial considerations are now the measure of political action', was increasingly embraced by 'the very class that was formerly for peace and retrenchment'.[2]

The Positivist contribution to the debate over empire was still more extensive, however. Comte's followers were the first to contend in a widespread and consistent manner that despotic rule over conquered peoples could not but corrupt Britain's own political institutions, at a time when the battle for domestic democracy had not yet been won. Integral to their analysis of imperialism, the Positivists also offered their own special interpretation of the issue of nationalism in this period, as a means both of explaining the growth of its jingoistic forms, and of projecting a post-imperial international state-system. The Positivists rejected romantic nationalism of the sort popularly associated with Mazzini and Garibaldi, but insisted upon not only the legitimacy, but the psychological and civic necessity of local and national forms of self-identity. As importantly, they attacked both the Christian and economic ideals of the chief existing school of imperial scepticism, led by Cobden and Bright, defining a new ethos based upon a broader and more relativistic humanitarianism rather than religious superiority and economic advantage. Patrick Geddes also offered a

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[1] [G. W. Russell]. *An On-Looker's Note Book* (1903), p. 243.   [2] Clarke. *Writings*, p. 74.

parallel account of the modern nation-state as an internally imperialist entity, with the metropolis dominating its hinterland as empires did their dominions. While not rejecting the *mission civilisatrice* as such, the Positivists overtly dismissed all of the more extreme forms of cosmopolitanism in favour of a policy of toleration, persuasion, local self-rule and gradualness. Their sympathy towards indigenous peoples was much deeper than that of most of their contemporaries: they defied a wrong which contemporaries by and large refused to recognise, and juxtaposed to it a right which they were compelled to invent as they went along. These efforts bore considerable fruit. Not only were the Positivists the first notable group in Britain to promote Irish Home Rule. They regarded this as only one application of a principle suitable for implementation everywhere. Ireland was thus to be not the exception, but the rule. Their contribution to debates about nationalism and self-determination in this period, hitherto mostly neglected, was in fact of considerable importance to a wide audience. The Religion of Humanity proved indeed a failure. The politics of Humanity, if we can adopt the phrase, was rather more successful.

Secondly, we have noted that the Boer War, previously in this context associated primarily with the public emergence of anti-imperialist argument on a substantial scale, in fact generated or assisted a shift for many on the left towards accommodation with empire, and even a 'socialist-imperialist' position. Socialists had decades before identified endemic trends within capitalism as the source of imperial expansionism, with Hyndman taking up J. C. Geddes's analysis as his own starting-point. For many India, in particular, was harshly exploited and deserved eventual self-rule. But the extensive acceptance of this position in socialist circles nearly two decades before Hobson's *Imperialism* appeared did not *ipso facto* imply the rejection of all forms of imperialism. To the contrary, many arguments seemed to favour a socialist stewardship of the world's resources, in which a humanitarian oversight of native peoples could be combined with the strategic development of tropical produce in particular. Hobson himself, too, as we have seen, adopted an argument established as far back as Vattel in the mid-eighteenth century, in which such exploitation, formerly rooted in theological principle, could now be justified on broadly utilitarian grounds. A variety of other writers then followed suit in contending that provided the excesses of capitalist exploitation were avoided, supervised development of extra-European resources underpinned by a civilisational argument could permit the continuance of a European economic presence in the tropics *ad infinitum*. We must of course acknowledge that most of the writers who subscribed to a 'socialist commonwealth' ideal believed that this would

facilitate the development of more democratic political institutions as well as a higher level of civilisation, even though an 'organic' approach implied that the wait might be considerable. But we have also noted that Hobson did not conceal the coercive provisions included in his scheme for permissible exploitation. National and local customs were to be respected wherever possible. But a right of refusing assistance which might seem more paternal than fraternal both in developing resources and in achieving social maturity was not an option. We see now, thus, that ironically Hobson's *Imperialism*, while generating anti-imperialist enthusiasm, also helped bring round a range of writers on the left, like Macdonald and Olivier, to a more imperialist position. It did so by focusing upon a right of exploitation which the British left had generally not emphasised and in fact very rarely entertained beforehand, preferring a vague nod towards legitimate nationalist aspiration and consensual trade instead. And we see that Hobson himself here built upon foundations laid in part by both Blatchford and the Fabians, and reinforced by Hewins, Kidd and others. Vattel's conquests proved, in fact, to be very impressive indeed.

Yet the process of accommodating socialism and imperialism, and forging a new socialist commonwealth ideal, while doubtless hastened by the Boer War, had already begun before its outbreak. The war was a nexus in the shift of public opinion, but the intellectual move towards a new ideal of empire on the left was not 'caused' by it. It must be stressed, however, that there did remain 'Little England' socialists to whom the socialist commonwealth ideal was alien or unattractive, just as there remained 'Little Englanders' amongst liberals and conservatives. These, in particular, issued the starkest warnings of the consequences of imperial indigestion. And, by and large, they were proved correct. As the Roman empire had gone, so went Greater Britain, with seeming inevitability. The stark warning of many of our protagonists here was that Britain would over-reach itself imperially, fail to develop and sustain its own internal resources and markets adequately, and to invest in skills and expertise at home rather than seeking a quicker return abroad, and then collapse under the burdens of military expenditure and inadequate competitiveness. It might be remade as a tourist venue; it might also retain genuine pride in its past and virtues. But if Britain were to be destroyed as an extended imperial nation, many, as we have seen, did not fear the prospect, even if it meant a reversion to medievalism or a post-commercial autarky. Some indeed welcomed the impending collapse of the empire, as freeing their nation from the arrogance and corruption which they insisted rule over vast numbers of alien peoples habitually instilled. 'Little England', thus, for some remained an object of

pride rather than contempt, a symbol of the virtues of restraint and self-reliance rather than the vices of greed and the lust for conquest.

Thirdly, we have noted the substantial diversity of motives which led critics of empire to depart from public opinion, and to 'listen to the other side', and specifically the role played in this process by religious as well as secular motives as both a justification of and in resistance to imperialism. Between 1865 and 1900, as we have seen, the anti-imperialist cause thus drew together an extraordinarily diverse group of individuals who grew closer, much of the time, as a result of their common commitment to this issue. For Hyndman and many socialists a secular viewpoint was the point of departure, while the Positivists, Blunt, Besant and Carpenter all used religious standpoints as a means of sympathising with non-European societies. What clearly links Harrison and Blunt in particular was their appreciation of Islam, whether reached through Comte or through independent study, as a religion equal in value, in its liberal forms, at least, to Christianity, and thus meriting equal respect. Religion as such, from this perspective, did not necessarily pose a hindrance to formulating a tolerant internationalist or cosmopolitan view of foreign policy. A dogmatic insistence on the superiority of Christianity did.

Fourthly, the narrative provided here has implications for both the history of political theory and that of international relations in this period in relation to the theory of the state. Here the critique of empire played a vital role. The 'secret transformation of ideas about the State is one of the most remarkable intellectual changes of our age', Hobson would proclaim in 1926, crediting this partly to 'ethical criticism of the economic foundations of society, partly to a new conception of the scope of politics, the two being closely related to one another'.[3] The epoch examined here was one in which ideas of the sovereignty of the state were in a considerable state of flux, though the secondary literature here is often unhistorical in its approach to the subject.[4] We have seen that virtually all of the

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[3] Hobson. 'Half-Century Progress in Social Ethics', 4.
[4] A basic introduction which complains of the inadequate diagnosis of the problem in this period is F. H. Hinsley. *Sovereignty* (1966), pp. 214–36. For the period from 1914, see Frank Trentmann. 'After the Nation-State: Citizenship, Empire and Global Co-ordination in the New Internationalism, 1914–1930', in Kevin Grant, Philippa Levine and Frank Trentmann, eds., *Beyond Sovereignty* (2007), pp. 34–53. See also Thomas W. Pogge. 'Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty', in Chris Brown, ed., *Political Restructuring in Europe* (1994), pp. 89–122, and Joseph A. Camilleri and Jim Falk. *The End of Sovereignty?* (Aldershot, 1992), pp. 11–43. For a general overview of related issues at this time see Stephen D. Krasner. *Sovereignty* (Princeton, 1999), pp. 152–83. There is much useful material in David Long and Peter Wilson, eds. *Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis* (Oxford, 1995). Also helpful for post-war liberalism is Jeanne Morefield. *Covenants Without Swords. Idealist Liberalism and the Spirit of Empire* (Princeton, 2005).

post-Cobdenite imperial sceptics writing before 1914, and particularly those promoting Comtean or socialist perspectives, were insistent that the existing system of sovereign nation-states had exhausted its usefulness. It had not only failed to halt the progress of militarism. It also disdainfully excluded large numbers of peoples not incorporated as states. To its critics, the system of imperial rivalry tended to fuel jingoistic nationalism and militarism both at home and abroad. The result was that the great power system was increasingly prone to instability and eventual self-destruction. Some assumed that British imperial expansion was a prime cause of this process. Others worried increasingly about the country's competitors, notably Germany after 1871, and consequently promoted British rule as a lesser evil. Either way, the growing threat of European war meant that the desirability of framing a process for the international arbitration of conflict became increasingly pressing in the early twentieth century. The First World War demonstrated this beyond any doubt. Paradoxically it also exposed the need both for a much wider acknowledgement of national rights to independence, and for a co-ordinating international mechanism to arbitrate between states, or a variety of federative structures capable of accommodating the impossibility in many areas of (in Arnold Toynbee's words) 'the political disentanglement of one nationality from another'.[5] Not only had the sufferings of Belgium and Serbia drawn attention in Europe to the plight of smaller nations, as G. P. Gooch noted in 1920. The proclamation of the Allies to be fighting for the principle of self-determination also echoed throughout the British empire, notably in India, Egypt and Ireland.[6] But just what they meant by this, as Erez Manela has recently argued, was nebulous. And to at least one of its leading proponents, Woodrow Wilson, it did not mean the national independence of colonised peoples from their colonial masters, but a much vaguer aim of generally democratic popular sovereignty.[7]

We have noted the widespread agreement amongst critics of imperialism as to the deep structural flaws in the League of Nations' design, which seemingly guaranteed the perpetuation of pre-war European tensions as well as extra-European exploitation. Whether, like the Positivists, they advised the creation of a plethora of smaller national units to reignite the sense of identity and solidarity with locality, or envisioned a large-scale

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[5] Arnold Toynbee. *Nationality and the War* (1915), p. 476.
[6] G. P. Gooch. *Nationality* (1920), pp. 108, 123.
[7] Erez Manela. *The Wilsonian Moment. Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford, 2007), p. 42.

international government to operate federatively to regulate international relations – or, to some entirely contradictorily,[8] both at the same time – they agreed that merely leaving the system of sovereignty untouched and untamed was insufficient. International anarchy had had its day. International order was to be its successor. How this was to be created out of a 'New Europe' resplendent with so many new nationalities, some already at each other's throats, threatening a widespread 'Balkanisation', in Norman Angell's words, was another matter.[9] None the less, as A. D. Lindsay put it in 1920, political facts had 'obviously outrun' the theory of the sovereign state, which suited neither the British empire nor the League of Nations, and whence 'the only solution is one which impairs sovereignty in the old sense'.[10] A host of works appeared from the early years of the war justifying this conclusion. Many of these emanated from imperial sceptics of the pre-war period, who had thus done much to prepare the ground for a new debate respecting the limits of sovereignty and the possibility of a United States of Europe, if not the world. Some took as an initial target the 'German' theory of the state, epitomised by Treitschke, in which the omnipotence of the state over the individual, in James Bryce's words, became the 'deadly theory which is at the bottom of German aggression'.[11] Yet others recognised that this was no temporary or national aberration. The more astute theorists posited that the much older absolutist doctrine of state sovereignty popularised from Bodin and Hobbes onwards had had (in Ramsay Muir's words) 'a very mischievous influence – never more mischievous than to-day'.[12] The same intermixture of cosmopolitan and internationalist ideals bantered about from the second half of the nineteenth century until the First World War continued to be debated through the interwar period. Hobson, as we have seen, urged a limitation upon sovereignty in order to make international government possible, while Lindsay stressed the growing 'discrepancy between the need for political organization created by the growth of economic interconnectedness and men's capacity and will for it'.[13] Writing under the auspices of the Fabian Society, Leonard Woolf emphasised that in international assemblies 'for a sovereign State to agree to be bound on any question by the decision of an international assembly would be to abandon

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[8] Israel Zangwill. *The Principle of Nationalities* (1917), p. 77.

[9] Norman Angell. *If Britain is to Live* (1923), p. 72.

[10] A. D. Lindsay. 'Political Thought', in F. S. Marvin, ed., *Recent Developments in European Political Thought* (Oxford, 1920), pp. 173–4.

[11] James Bryce, 'Introduction', in Louise Creighton et al. *The International Crisis: the Theory of the State* (Oxford, 1916), p. 2.

[12] Ramsay Muir. *The Interdependent World and its Problems* (1932), p. 113.

[13] A. D. Lindsay. 'The State and Society', in Creighton et al. *The International Crisis*, p. 105.

its sovereignty'.[14] Harold Laski urged a reconceptualisation of the state-system such that nations would view one another 'not as a sovereign community, but as a mere province in the *civitas maxima* of mankind'.[15] H. G. Wells promoted a world-state ideal tirelessly until his death in 1946. It proved premature, as Alfred Cobban observed, to pronounce the death of sovereignty, which 'reappeared in the guise of totalitarianism, more terrible than ever before'.[16] None the less to many the First World War, if not the rivalry of the pre-war epoch, demonstrated the principle that international peace and co-operation would only be safeguarded by some scheme of limiting sovereignty by arbitration or mediation through suitable international bodies. In Britain the function of the imperial sceptics in this debate was to have urged the strongest possible case for limiting great power expansionism from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Here, clearly, it was an interventionist regulatory moral and political ideal, not the legacy of a Cobdenite economic model, which gained the upper hand.

This acknowledgement of the limits of sovereignty has yet to prove a wholly successful means of restraining the actions of states, especially great powers, in the international sphere. It does, however, mark a seminal moment both in the history of states, and in that of the political theory of international relations and the theory of the state itself. More successful, from a twenty-first-century perspective, has been the ethical critique of conquest and imperial exploitation by unprincipled capitalists, and its justification through professing the advantages of Christian civilisation. Exploitation of course continues, of oil, wood, water and other resources, but such empires as remain, now mostly informal, lack at least these pretexts now to mask their nakedness, even if, as in the fable of the emperor's new clothes, few courtiers will say so openly. Though justifications, possessing more or less validity, continue to be provided for military interference in the affairs of other nations, the promise of Christian redemption or of the advantages of European civilisation at least are not amongst them. Instead, the mission of civilisation argument has been modified to focus on exporting democracy. But this also sometimes appears a very hollow disguise, and a rather poor boon, if my 'giving' you democracy means your right to choose only the system I think you ought to have to start with. And consequently this ideal, too, is met with increasing scepticism.

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[14] Woolf. *International Government*, p. 39. On Woolf see Peter Wilson. *The International Theory of Leonard Woolf* (2003).
[15] Harold J. Laski. *Nationalism and the Future of Civilisation* (1932), p. 21.
[16] Cobban. *National Self-Determination*, p. 66.

Yet after five hundred devastating years of imposing 'civilisation' upon non-Europeans, at the cost of perhaps a hundred million lives, it is surely a major instance of progress, particularly from a non-European perspective, that the notion that we possess a right to *force* our institutions and ways of life upon others, like it or not, as opposed to offering them the best possible model of good practice, is at least highly suspect. We have, it seems, nearly a century after the point at which this study ends, finally come close to heeding the advice of many of the opponents of exploitative empire whose views we have examined here. Not merely toleration of but respect for non-Western cultures has never been greater. Small nationalities are increasingly accorded recognition, even if disentangling them remains immensely complex. Racism in principle no longer provides an acceptable justification for paternal rule, even if practice lags well behind theory. These are the foundational ideals of modern identity politics. They exemplify another view of civilisation, defined in terms of the kindness of strangers and the prevalence of a humanist ethical ideal rather than the superiority of one system of manners over all others and the ethos of the survival of the fittest. They point, in the best sense, towards the ideal of the co-operative commonwealth of nations which some theorists developed in the period before 1914. What Bhikhu Parekh has described as 'moral monism', the view that 'only one way of life is fully human, true, or the best, and that all others are defective to the extent that they fall short of it', is now in substantial retreat.[17] With it has gone or is going much of the arrogance and cruelty of the imperial age. We may not, with Comte, feel predisposed to worship the Blunts, Harrisons, Hyndmans and others who endeavoured to make this possible. But we may yet acknowledge that without their courageousness in breaking from some of the most powerful and cherished prejudices of their day, and listening to the other side, we would not have advanced even as far down this path towards human unity as we have today.

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[17] Bhikhu Parekh. *Rethinking Multiculturalism* (2003), p. 16.

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